

The November Coalition

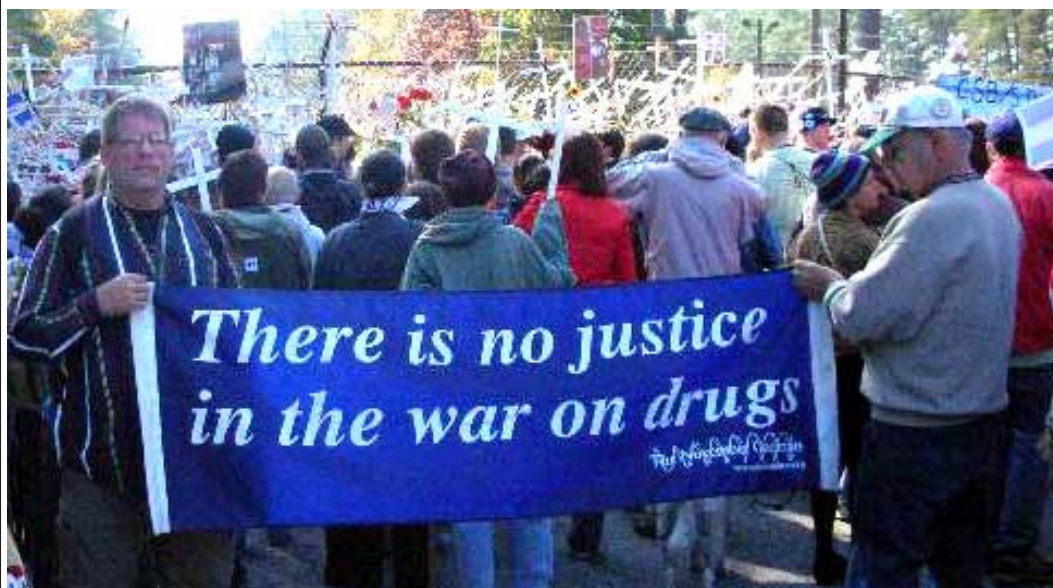
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Razor Wire

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Drug Peace Day Rally Speech

(On Father's Day, June 15th, 1997, the following speech was given in San Francisco at the First International Drug Peace Day Rally. This event was held by Legalize! and other events were held globally. The speech was written by G. Patrick Callahan, Dave Perk and Mauricio Reuben, all Prisoners of War in America, and delivered by Nora Callahan. We are re-printing it here to commemorate our upcoming 10th Anniversary.)

Good afternoon. There is an anguished cry — a cry of sorrow and despair that screams across this nation — but no one can hear it. These cries of sorrow are coming from behind the walls and wire, then dissipate in corn fields and far-off hillsides where our federal government is hiding the prisons! We are a country at war! I am here today to give voice to those cries and bring you a message from the prisoners of war in America.

The war on drugs is a hoax. It is a fraud inflicted on the American people. It is based on lies, deception, hypocrisy and propaganda. It is not about making America drug free. It is not a war against crime. It is a war against our freedom! It squanders precious resources and tax dollars while it fans flames of crime, corruption and violence. America is burning and our government is providing the fuel.

For more than thirty years now we have been duped into pouring hundreds of billions of dollars down a dark crevasse that has fractured our society. There have been the arrests of over ten million citizens from all walks of life. Over ten million! This has destroyed millions of families and still the war goes on and on.

Homes and property have been seized without due process. In conventional war this is called "disarming the enemy." In the war on drugs it is called "asset forfeiture." It is theft, plain and simple, for in most cases of asset forfeiture a criminal indictment is never made!

We currently have millions of non-violent drug law violators behind bars or on supervised release, Millions. We have become the world's leading jailer, becoming what we most despised about Soviet Russia during the Cold War. We pressure the countries of the world to adopt our failed policy or else . . .

Many of our federal prisons are holding twice their capacity. Our federal government alone operates 132 prisons and camps. Fifteen are under construction right now with twelve more on the drawing board. When these are open they will need 50 more, and then 70, and 90 after that ... In effect our federal government alone must build an 832 bed facility every two weeks just to keep up with the punishment of non-violent crime!

The cost in dollars is staggering, the cost in lives is immeasurable.

Prison in America is not a place of rehabilitation. It is a place of violence, humiliation, despair, and deprivation. All of this in the name of justice? All of this human destruction in a futile war against substances.

Inhuman lengths of incarceration have done nothing to stem the flow of drugs. A recent study proved that it only increases it. Yet we continue to build prisons instead of building schools.

Right now here in California you have five prisons under construction that will cost you more than 200 million dollars each — just to build! After construction the cost of warehousing one non-violent

drug law violator will consume the entire tax bill of four families.

Can you afford this war? What are you getting for your money besides destruction? What must the rest of the world think when they see a country more committed to building prisons than building schools — where prison guards are paid more than teachers?

It is said that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. We have tried this before. Alcohol prohibition was a disaster just as drug prohibition is now. Making criminals of consenting adults has always brought grief and damaged the delicate weave of social fabric.

Recently our president promised Mexico that he would insure America's appetite for drugs would be curbed. Who does he think he

is kidding? We cannot curb it until we address it. A question we have failed to ask is not whether America has a drug problem, but why? Furthermore, a fundamental question that must be asked is not what you think of drugs and drug use — but do you want a Bill of Rights or not?

The stain of repression in the name of the War on Drugs is spreading like bad dye into the fabric of all our lives. It has tarnished our government as well. We no longer have a system of checks and balances within our distinct branches of government. Judicial, executive and legislative branches have merged to speak with one voice — and that voice is irrational!

We of the November Coalition are neither for or against drug use. We do support the right of the individual to make personal choices. Laws are futile and become oppressive when they place controls on consensual activity — especially when millions and millions of Americans are involved.

We must call for an immediate end to the hollow slogans, such as "Just Say No" and "Zero Tolerance" — messages our government brings. Realistic education must be given to our children. We must offer drug treatment as opposed to incarceration. We must demand the immediate release of all non-violent drug law violators from our nation's jails and prisons!

Students, you must become active in opposing this war! This is your Vietnam, and you hold the keys of freedom. Parents, it could be your children next. In fifty years, if we keep this up, half of this country will be behind bars. This War on Drugs is another no-win war and it is time to stop it.



Nora Callahan,
Executive Director of the
November Coalition, at
Drug Peace Day, San
Francisco, CA, 1997



Drug Peace Day, San Francisco, CA, June 15, 1997

10th Anniversary Inside Out Benefit Auction

How You Can Commemorate A Decade Of Struggle

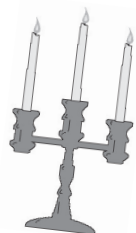


Year 2007 marks 10 years of November

Coalition public education and organizing to end the injustice of the war on drugs. In Colville, Washington, the evening of March 31, 2007 is dedicated to fundraising

and spending time with old friends. People attending will enjoy a wholesome dinner, an online and live auction, music by Planetary Refugees, and dancing till midnight.

If you don't live in Colville, you can still participate. The online auction culminates the evening of March 31st, and everyone can be involved.

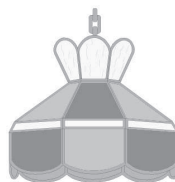


Do you own collectibles that you aren't attached to, aside from knowing they have some monetary value? Do you have a set of old, but like new china, or memorabilia from a bygone era? Are you cleaning out closets, and don't know what to do with things that are valuable, but no longer valuable to you?

Perhaps you have a collection of out of print books, or collection of artwork? Maybe you have old comic books, or baseball cards with nominal value, but you don't want to bother selling it. Box those collectibles that are just taking up space, and ship them (at your cost) to the November Coalition. You can watch the national auction online and see how much money your donated item brings.

Proceeds will be used to publish this newspaper for prisoners and educate a public not yet aware of the terrible consequences of the war on drugs.

Are you an artist, or crafter? Do you sew quilts, make pottery or paint pictures that other people would buy, but you'd rather sew, draw, paint or sculpt for pleasure, and leave tasks of selling and any financial gain to a deserving nonprofit?



Donate your artistic creations to November Coalition — we'll make them available for the national online auction that will culminate on March 31, 2007.

Are you a collector, or bargain hunter? Auction items will be posted online at www.november.org as they are received. Bookmark our website today!

Ship items to: Inside Out Auction, November Coalition, 282 West Astor, Colville, WA 99114.

Questions about items or collections you want to donate can be answered by emailing moreinfo@november.org, calling 509-684-1150 or writing to November Coalition at the mailing address above.



Don't delay, ship those items right away! Items shipped become the property of the November Coalition and will be auctioned to the highest bidder on March 31, 2007. Please include your name, address, and approximate value of the items, (if the monetary value is known).



Eye On Congress: Late-Breaking News!

December 2006 — In a final attempt to pass the Second Chance Act Of 2005 (S 1934/HR 1704) before the end of the 109th Congress, Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA), Joe Biden (D-DE) and Sam Brownback (R-KS) tried to fast track the bill for passage. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), however, stalled that process by putting a hold on the bill.

He objected to the bill on grounds that "There is no federal role in prisoner re-entry." and contended that "States have the resources to reduce recidivism and improve re-entry without federal support."

The Second Chance Act is re-entry legislation designed to ensure the safe and successful return of prisoners to the community.

Bill sponsors plan to reintroduce the measure in the 110th Congress and will continue to reach out to Senator Coburn and his staff to reach a compromise on the measure.

Source: www.reentrypolicy.org



We Can Auction Your:

- New or like-new electronics; GameBoys, PlayStations, DVD Players, iPods, even computers!
- Quality artwork or hand-made crafts
- Rare used books
- Sought after collectibles
- Rare comics or comic collections
- Sports card or stamp collections
- Vintage memorabilia
- Antiques



So clean out your attics, dig through your garages, and see what you find. If you think it can sell, send it to us!

The November Coalition

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The Razor Wire is a supplemental communication to imprisoned members of the November Coalition. Published twice a year, we notify members of special projects and progress, maintaining a daily updated website at www.november.org. Join thousands that visit us online for up-to-the-minute drug war reports and instructions on how they can help end the failed war on drugs. Support people working to end drug war injustice with a donation and membership in November Coalition today.

To join The November Coalition and receive this newspaper, see membership form on page 22.

IF YOU OWN OR OPERATE A RETAIL STORE, OR DO COMMUNITY ACTIVISM, CONTACT OUR OFFICE FOR INFO ABOUT BULK DISTRIBUTION.



EYE ON CONGRESS

Drug Reform And The Democratic Congress: What's Going To Happen?

BY PHIL SMITH, FOR DRUG WAR CHRONICLE (US)

To hear the buzz in drug reform circles, Christmas came early this year. To be precise, it arrived on Election Day, when the Democrats took back control of the Congress. There is a whole long list of drug reform-related issues that the Democratically-controlled Congress can address, and hopes are high that after a dozen years of Republican rule on Capitol Hill, progress will come on at least some of them. But will the Democratic Congress really turn out to be Santa Claus, bestowing gifts on a movement long out in the cold, or will it turn out more like the Grinch, offering up tantalizing glimpses of the goodies only to snatch them away?

Drug War Chronicle is trying to find out what's likely to happen, so we talked to a number of drug reform organizations, especially those with a strong federal lobbying presence and agenda, as well as with the offices of some of the representatives who will be playing key roles on Capitol Hill in the next Congress.

The list of drug war issues where Congress could act next year is indeed lengthy:

- * Sentencing reform — whether addressing the crack-powder cocaine disparity or mandatory minimums or both, and other reforms;

- * Medical marijuana, either through the Hinchey-Rohrabacher amendment barring federal funds to raid patients and providers in states where it is legal or Barney Frank's states' rights to medical marijuana bill;

- * The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP — the drug czar's office) is up for reauthorization;

- * The Higher Education Act (HEA) and its drug provision are up for reauthorization;

- * Removing drug offender restrictions from food stamp, public housing, and other social services;

- * The Washington, DC, appropriations bill, where Congress has barred the District from enacting needle exchange programs and a voter-approved medical marijuana law;

- * Plan Colombia;

- * The war in Afghanistan and US anti-opium policy;

- * The pain crisis and the war on pain doctors;

- * Prisoner reentry legislation, particularly the Second Chance Act;

- * Police raids.

While there is optimism in drug reform circles, it is tempered by a healthy dose of realism. The Congress is a place where it is notoriously difficult to make (or unmake) a law,

and while some of the new Democratic leadership has been sympathetic on certain issues, drug reform is not exactly a high-profile issue. Whether congressional Democratic decision-makers will decide to use their political resources advancing an agenda that could be attacked as "soft on drugs" or "soft on crime" remains to be seen. But according to one of the movement's most astute Hill-watchers, some "low-hanging fruit" might be within reach next year.

"Some of the easiest things to achieve in the new Congress will be the HEA ban on aid to students with drug violations, because the

WHETHER CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKERS WILL DECIDE TO USE THEIR POLITICAL RESOURCES ADVANCING AN AGENDA THAT COULD BE ATTACKED AS "SOFT ON DRUGS" OR "SOFT ON CRIME" REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

Democrats will have to deal with HEA reauthorization, and the ban on access to the TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) to public housing, because they will have to deal with welfare reform," said Bill Piper, director of national affairs for the Drug Policy Alliance. "There is also a chance of repealing provisions in the DC appropriations bill that bar needle exchanges and medical marijuana. These are the low-hanging fruit."

For Piper, there is also a chance to see movement on a second tier of issues, including medical marijuana, sentencing reform and Latin America policy. "Can we get the votes to pass Hinchey-Rohrabacher in the House and get it to the Senate?" he asked. "There is also a good chance of completely changing how we deal with Latin America. We could see a shift in funding from military to civil society-type programs and from eradication to crop substitution," he said. "Also, there is a good chance on sentencing reform. Can the Democrats strike a deal with Sen. Sessions (R-AL) and other Republicans on the crack-powder disparity, or will they try to play politics and paint the Democrats as soft on crime? Would Bush veto it if it passed?"

Clearly, at this point, there are more questions than answers, and time will tell. But the political ground has shifted, Piper noted. "We are no longer playing defense," he argued. "Now we don't have to deal with folks like Souder and Sensenbrenner and all their stupid bills. This puts us in a really good position. For

the first time in 12 years, we get to go on offense. And unlike a dozen years ago, the Democrats who will control the key committees are really, really good. This is probably the first time since the 1980s that drug policy reform has been in a position to go on the offensive."

Representatives sympathetic to drug law reform will fill key positions in the next Congress, led by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), who will be the incoming chair of the crucial House Judiciary Committee. Replacing HEA drug provision author and leading congressional drug warrior Rep. Mark Souder (R-IN) as chair of the important Government Reform Committee Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources will be either Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) or Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL) — the assignment isn't yet set — while Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) will chair the Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, the key subcommittee when it comes to sentencing reform.

While it is too early to get firm commitments from committee heads on hearings next year, a spokesman for Rep. Conyers told *Drug War Chronicle* sentencing reform is definitely on the table. "Congressman Conyers is certainly interested in these issues, he's been quite outspoken on this, and it is something he will address, but we haven't come out with our agenda and we don't have a timeline yet," said House Judiciary Committee press officer Jonathan Godfrey. "But this will definitely be an issue for the committee," he added.

Conyers and the new Democratic Congress may not yet have established their agendas, but the drug reform movement certainly has, and sentencing reform, whether through addressing the crack-powder cocaine sentencing disparity or through a broader assault on the federal mandatory minimum sentencing scheme, is front and center. Perhaps not surprisingly, many leading reformers said addressing the crack-powder disparity was not enough.

"There's been a lot of discussion about eliminating the crack/powder cocaine sentencing disparity, or even removing the definition of crack from the guidelines entirely," said DRCNet executive director Dave Borden. "We of course support that, but we also hope the issue of mandatory minimums themselves, and the sentencing guidelines, are also taken up. Those are far bigger problems, affecting far

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

more people than that one controversial but small piece of them. It may be that only small changes are possible at this time, even with our best Congressional friends in important positions. Nevertheless, the opportunity should be taken to raise the larger sentencing issues, to organize around them, build support, attract cosponsors for mandatory minimum repeal bills, all the things that go with any legislative campaign — what better time than now?”

“While we of course favor reforming the crack-powder cocaine disparity, we need to stop thinking small,” said Julie Stewart, executive director of Families Against Mandatory Minimums. “We need to be looking at sentencing reform as a whole. We will be asking for legislation to address the crack-powder disparity, but we will also be asking for hearings on the repeal of mandatory minimum sentencing,” she said. “Whether we can get that is another question, but it’s time to ask for the sky.”

Stewart’s sentiments were echoed and amplified by Nora Callahan, executive director of The November Coalition, a drug reform group that concentrates on winning freedom for federal drug war prisoners. “What we need is an omnibus crime bill,” Callahan said. “Otherwise we’ll be picking this thing apart for the next five decades. An omnibus bill would open the door to broad hearings where we could address the myriad negative effects of the drug war, from imprisoning huge numbers of people to depriving students of loans and poor people of housing and other federal benefits, and from police corruption to police violence. If we try to deal with all these problems one by one, the prison population will have doubled again by the time we get it done.”

Of course, sentencing reform isn’t the only drug policy issue activists will be pushing next year. Medical marijuana remains on the agenda, with the biggest push likely to be around the Hinchey-Rohrabacher amendment, which would bar the use of federal funds to raid patients and providers in states where it is legal. “We will be looking for meaningful protections for medical marijuana patients,” said Aaron Houston, director of government relations at the Marijuana Policy Project. “We will judge progress by the extent to which patients can use the medicine that works best for them without fear of federal arrest or prosecution. We need meaningful reforms, not ones that sound meaningful but are not, like rescheduling,” he added.

“Our legislative priorities in the past have been Hinchey-Rohrabacher, the states’ rights to medical marijuana bill, and the Truth in Trials Act, which would allow for an affirmative defense in federal court,” said Houston. “Of these, we expect that we should be able to pass Hinchey. Last year, we had 167 votes, and we picked up 19 new members in November who we think are supportive. And when Speaker-

elect Pelosi assumes the gavel in January, it will be the first time we have a strong medical marijuana supporter at the helm of the House of Representatives.”

Those numbers are encouraging, but not quite enough to win yet. It takes 218 votes to win a majority in the House if everyone votes.

And as DPA’s Piper noted above, the HEA reauthorization bill next year should be a good opportunity to finally kill Souder’s drug provision once and for all. “We have a tremendous opportunity here with the Democrats taking control and deciding which legislation moves forward,” said Tom Angell, communications director for Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP). “Rep. George Miller (D-CA) will chair the House Education Work Force Committee, and he’s a cosponsor of the RISE Act. Also, one of our biggest supporters, Rep. Rob Andrews (D-NJ), is in line to chair the subcommittee that handles higher education, which is where the RISE Act sits right now.”

But Andrews may not end up with the chairmanship, Angell warned. “He’s a supporter of for-profit colleges, and the Democratic leadership doesn’t like that, so he might not get it,” he said.

“We’d like to see the HEA drug provision repealed, and we think it’s possible in the new Congress,” said DRCNet’s Borden. “There just isn’t a lot of passion from very many members of Congress for keeping the provision, even among those who have voted to do so. We’d like to see legislation to repeal similar provisions in welfare and public housing law — we have a coalition of over 250 organizations that have signed on to repealing the HEA drug provision, and activating that network and building it to take on more issues is definitely on our agenda.”

The RISE (Removing Impediments to Students’ Education) Act would repeal the Higher Education Act’s (HEA) drug provision, SSDP’s key congressional goal. While Angell was optimistic about prospects in the next Congress, he was also looking for early indicators. “The introduction of the bill, the number of cosponsors, and the top names behind it will be a good indication of how likely we are to repeal the penalty,” he said. “I’m looking for that to happen early in the session. We had 84 lobbying meetings on Capitol Hill during our annual conference last month, and we will be following up on those and working closely with the staff of the education committee.”

But repealing the HEA drug provision isn’t SSDP’s only goal on Capitol Hill, said Angell. “We are hoping to be working with DPA and MPP to reduce or eliminate funding for the ONDCP media campaign and we will be working to reduce or eliminate funding for student drug testing grants,” he explained. “Besides HEA, those are our big issues.”

One issue that has emerged as a hot topic in recent weeks is the issue of police violence. With the killing of Atlanta senior citizen Kathryn

Johnson in a “no-knock” drug raid and the killing of New York City resident Sean Bell a few days later in a volley of more than 50 shots fired by NYPD officers, policing in America is under the spotlight. Civil rights activist and former presidential candidate the Rev. Al Sharpton called this week for congressional hearings on the issue. Sharpton said he had already been in contact with Rep. Conyers about the possibility.

That’s something DRCNet’s Borden would like to see, too. “We’d like to see action taken to rein in these paramilitary police forces and not have SWAT teams breaking down people’s doors in the middle of the night when there is not an emergency situation. I think there should be hearings in Congress, as well as state legislatures, with victims of bad drug raids playing a prominent role, as well as police experts, civil rights experts, and the like. We are considering launching a petition calling for all of this,” he said.

And then there is the US drug war abroad. With Plan Colombia about to enter its seventh year, and the flow of cocaine unabated despite massive aerial spraying of herbicides, congressional Democrats will seek to cut back or redirect US spending to emphasize development instead of drug war. And although Congress has not yet come to grips with the serious contradictions inherent in waging war on poppies at the same time it seeks to wage a war on terror in Afghanistan, facts on the ground suggest it will be unable to continue to ignore them.

This should be a year of change in our drug policy abroad, said DRCNet’s Borden. “We’d like to see the coca and opium eradication programs stopped. They are useless; all they do is move the cultivation from place to place,” he noted. “In Afghanistan, it’s driving people into the arms of the Taliban for protection, and that’s disastrous for our national interests and potentially for global security. There are credible plans put forward, by the UN and other international bodies, and by experts in the nonprofit sector, that don’t rely on eradication; let’s look at those.”

Borden also urged Congress to act to address the crisis in pain care in the context of the administration’s war on prescription drug abuse and prosecutions of pain doctors. “Last but not least, something must be done about the pain doctor prosecutions,” he said. “I believe the law in this area has been fundamentally warped. Conyers has supported important work being done in this area. Now he’s in a position to kick it up a notch.”

Drug reformers have a mighty busy agenda for Congress in the next two years. Congressional Democrats have said they are interested in reforms; now that they will be in power, we will see if they are as good as their word and we will have the chance to prod them to act.

Source: www.stopthedrugwar.org/chronicle



The 'Stop Snitchin' Movement

October 2006, Kansas City, Missouri

Hello Friends:

My Name is Joe Louis Gonzales III. I am currently serving a 15 year sentence in Federal Prison.

When sentenced to the federal system, a person must serve 85% of the sentence, and federal sentences are excessively long. If the Federal Parole Bill is passed, a person imprisoned, who works on rehabilitation, would have a chance to return to his family sooner,

and rebuild life as a productive citizen. Support for returning parole or a form of earned, early release is what I'm working on with the help of family and friends on the outside.

A second project that I'm working on I call the "Get Stop Snitching Right" campaign, and it's a touchy subject.

Touchy or not, "Get Stop Snitching Right" is an important project because most federal prisoners are locked up for inhumane lengths of time, solely on the word of informants.

Drug conspiracy laws can convict a person on another person's statement. If that were not bad, in and of itself, most of the time the person testifying against another is doing so to get a reduction in their own sentence. Many times the people testifying against someone didn't even know the people, and other times family members turn in family member so they don't have to go to prison. Still, the prisons fill and innocent people are swept up into the system, too.

A return to parole

would give relief to those imprisoned today. People on the streets refusing to turn people over in order to save themselves would bring relief today. People coming together to change the laws would save millions of people this anguish tomorrow.

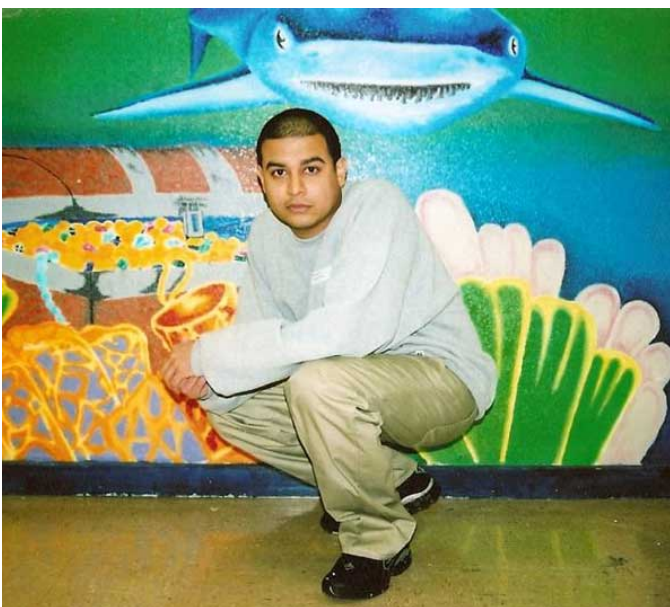
I owned an independent music store and record label before I was incarcerated, and I feel the best way I can tell people what's going on is through music. With the help of my family and friends, we recorded a CD to share our messages with our community. Other men that worked with me on this project are incarcerated, serving anywhere from seven years to life sentences. About 60% of the music and messages on the *Stop Snitching* CD were created by those imprisoned.

Part of the promotion includes a billboard (see above) in my hometown of Kansas City, MO, promoting the support of federal parole and the CD. We already have support through the music website, www.siccness.net, and we're now featured at www.november.org — feel free to add a link to your website, and write a review of this project here.

The more people behind what we are doing, the better chance of being families again together, and preventing more mass imprisonment through the betrayal of snitching. You can contact me through my father Joe at: jgonzales@kc.rr.com or call 913-710-6820.

Thank you & God Bless — Joe Gonzales III

Note: Find this album at www.siccness.net



Joe L. Gonzales III

Update on Penny Spence

BY CHRYSTAL WEAVER, FLORIDIANS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

As reported in Summer 2006 *Razor Wire*, under Florida's mandatory minimum laws for drug offenses, trafficking charges are triggered by drug weight, without consideration of intent to distribute or prior record. If a person is arrested with more than 25 pounds of marijuana, more than 28 grams of cocaine or more than five Percocet pills — which typically consist of 99% Tylenol — law enforcement authorities may bring charges of drug trafficking rather than mere possession. Prosecutors have the discretion to increase, or reduce the charges.

I became aware of the issues surrounding the drug laws in this country when my sister, Penny Spence, was arrested for having 48 pain pills without a prescription. We were astonished to find out that 48 pills triggered felony drug trafficking. My sister faced a mandatory prison sentence of 25 years. At first we thought it was a joke, or some sort of mistake — it could not be true!

If convicted of drug trafficking, a defendant faces a mandatory sentence of at least three years in prison. The mandatory minimums rise for larger amounts. My sister, Penny Spence, was facing 25 years — unless she accepted a deal offered by Broward County Assistant State Attorney A. Theodore Daus III. Under that deal, she would get up to two years of house arrest in exchange for a guilty plea. But then Penny would have a drug trafficking and felony record. That would kill her hope of becoming a nurse.

Penny pleaded "No Contest" to "Felony Drug Trafficking" late summer and is serving a year of house arrest and two years of probation. Judge Lebow indicated that she was going to



Chrystal (left) and Penny have been involved in sharing their story with the media. Topical Currents Radio Program on NPR, Currents Magazine, Daily Business Review, CBS Miami's Focus on South Florida, Las Olas Magazine (upcoming Feb 2007 Issue) have covered this story.

rule against Penny's "Motion to Suppress" and the Judge was happy that Penny was able to get this plea deal from the state. The punishment itself is not the bad part; the worst part is that Penny has to live the rest of her life as a convicted drug felon.

Our commitment is stronger than ever, and we are working with others in our county to change laws in Florida and throughout the country. We want to thank all of you for your continued interest and support during this very emotional and trying time.

Floridians for Criminal Justice Reform

A new organization out of Broward County, FL is taking on hard issues with passionate members in Florida.

Goals they deem most important in the coming years are:

1) **Abolishing Mandatory Minimum Sentences for Non-Violent Drug Offenders**, thereby giving the Judge the power to calibrate the punishment to fit the crime. Under current FL law, if a person has as little as 32 tablets of 10 mg Percocet pills without a valid RX, that person will be charged with FELONY DRUG TRAFFICKING and sentenced to a MANDATORY of 25 Years in prison. There is no early release and the Judge must impose this ridiculous sentence. These MAN MINS are:

- Ineffective (Treatment is more effective than incarceration)
- Costly (We spend untold sums of money incarcerating non-violent people on drug offenses)
- Unjust (No one in their right mind would agree that someone should go to prison for 25 years for having 32 pain pills without a prescription.)

2) **Improving Conditions In Florida's Prisons.** News reports abound of maggots in green beans, guards beating and killing imprisoned children, lack of proper medical care resulting in death. There are sex for drug scandals, corruption, and guards ignoring the humanity of people imprisoned. There are many people in prison that are NON-VIOLENT and were simply addicted to drugs and landed in prison because of their addiction.

3) **Second Chance for Non-Violent Inmates.** Looking at the current prison population and seeing which NON-VIOLENT offenders should be released and given a "second chance" at life. The only winners in the current system are the private prison companies that stand to make a huge profit from a growing prison population. The US has the highest incarceration rate in the WORLD! And this is due mainly to our draconian drug laws.

If you live in Broward County, or elsewhere in Florida and want to network with like-minded people, get in touch with this group today, at fl_cjr@yahoo.com or chrystal@november.org.

Update On Richard Paey

BY DR. LINDA PAEY (RICHARD'S WIFE)

December 2006 — We were terribly shocked and upset by the news from the court that Richard's appeal was turned down. (Editor: Richard Paey, wheelchair bound and in chronic pain, is serving 25 years in prison for 'prescription fraud/drug trafficking'. There was no evidence of trafficking presented at trial; Richard was just trying to adequately medicate his constant pain.)

We are asking everyone to call, fax, and send letters to Florida Governor-Elect Charlie Crist's office to support Rich's clemency/pardon request. Gov. Crist has an opportunity to correct this travesty as soon as he takes office in January 2007 — contact him at:

Governor Charlie Crist

FL State Capitol, 400 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399, Ph: 850/488/7146 • Fx: 850-487-0801



Richard is an accomplished cartoonist; for more 'Toons by Paey', visit www.november.org/cartoons



LAW LIBRARY

Backers Of LERA Hopeful For 110th Congress

By LARRY SCHULENBERG, FATHER OF A
DRUG WAR PRISONER

Petitioning Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

By CHUCK ARMSBURY, SENIOR EDITOR

We were hijacked," wrote Mujaddid R. Muhammad in a *Razor Wire* editorial for summer 2006 issue, page 13. He was referring to the *Blakely/Booker* Supreme Court rulings that initially inspired hope in confined people plainly eligible for relief under the ruling. As if to prove how "hope is a poor friend," these individuals are routinely denied retroactive consideration despite mountains of evidence before the Court that thousands of federal sentences over the past 20 years have been justified by guidelines now deemed unconstitutional.

Muhammad argued that an impasse is not acceptable under any law, that a solution is at hand, and that retroactive application of *Blakely/Booker* rulings for eligible US federal prisoners is appropriate and implied, for example, by the American Convention on Human Rights, which provides in Article 9:

"A heavier penalty shall not be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the criminal offense was committed. If subsequent to the commission of the offense the law provides for the imposition of a lighter punishment, the guilty person shall benefit therefrom." — (Underlining added - editor)

In fact, the United States Government is signatory to Article 9 under the Convention, adopted at the Inter-American Specialized Conference on Human Rights, San Jose, Costa Rica, November 22, 1969. The Conference (and Convention) is part of the Organization of American States (OAS) and has a Washington DC address:

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 1889 F Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20006.

Muhammad's editorial quoted David E. Johnson who insisted, in part, that (Congress and the President) "should be troubled and poised to act when it is known that the Constitution has not been upheld for hundreds of thousands of prisoners now serving unconstitutional sentences," and should by national and international principle be allowed to "benefit" these "guilty" people.

Thus, the idea is out there that the President and Members of Congress should and could be brought before an independent court of justice to explain why they have refused or failed to act on the legal spirit and requirements of the *Blakely/Booker* findings. And now that forum for justice just could be the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Information is available online about the

Commission at

www.cidh.org/DefaultE.htm.

Here's Article 23 on "Presentation of Petitions":

Any person or group of persons or nongovernmental entity legally recognized in one or more of the Member States of the OAS may submit petitions to the Commission, on their own behalf or on behalf of third persons, concerning alleged violations of a human right recognized in, as the case may be, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the American Convention on Human Rights, the Additional Protocol in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Protocol to Abolish the Death Penalty, the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture, the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons, and/or the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, in accordance with their respective provisions, the Statute of the Commission, and these Rules of Procedure.

The petitioner may designate an attorney or other person to represent him or her before the Commission, either in the petition itself or in another writing.

With more and more South and Central American nations standing up to White House policies, isn't it a fine time to petition for a show-cause hearing with a demand that President Bush and Members of Congress answer to a Western Hemisphere organization (OAS) — and its human rights commission — about why they're ignoring easily understood requirements of the American Convention on Human Rights — Article 9 precisely?

Let's open up new fronts to challenge a do-nothing polarized Congress and weak President on human rights issues — even if some disagree with the spirit and intent of Article 9. If you're uncomfortable with doing nothing and with shame for our country as world's leading jailer of seven million in some level of custody, it's time to recognize and benefit tens of thousands of US prisoners eligible today for relief and release under the American Convention on Human Rights.

Petitioners: start your engines.

Send me in, Coach." And the story goes that the puny little guy carries the football across the goal line and wins the game. The crowd cheers, and he's carried off the field on the shoulders of teammates.

That's the scenario those of us at Federal Prison Policy Project (FPPP) are praying will take place after the new Congress convenes. In 2003, we begged for the chance to collaborate and play with the big boys, the well-known prison reform groups, and we convinced Rep. Bobby Scott to sponsor the bill that we had penned: The Literacy, Education, and Rehabilitation Act (LERA). We got into the ball game. And it's possible we'll get to carry the ball for a touchdown.

Three years ago, the members of FPPP argued, discussed, debated, and compromised to give birth to LERA. The bill provides for "earned early release." When LERA is enacted, federal prisoners will be encouraged to earn additional "good time" by taking high school or GED classes, or college or vocational courses. Prisoners with those degrees can earn "good time" by teaching classes themselves. Prisoners must maintain exemplary behavior records to receive credit toward "earned early release."

Highlighting anticipated leadership changes in the 110th Congress in January, 2007, Congressman Bobby Scott of Virginia will assume the chairmanship of the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, thereby increasing likelihood LERA will have a hearing. Scott has been quoted as saying that he wants to reform criminal justice laws and to reduce costly incarceration.

Early in January 2007, FPPP will be calling for your help as we continue the struggle to make LERA into law, thus helping to reunite families and welcome formerly incarcerated people back into the world.

For more online information about Federal Prison Policy Project: www.fppp.org

FREE Spanish Law Materials

Prisoners: We are presently out of David Zapp's "*Manual De Pautas de la Comision Federal De Sentencias par las Sentencias Federales*."

However, Mr. Zapp has made available to us limited copies of "*Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure*" (*Reglamento Federal de Enjuiciamiento Penal*) and "*The Criminal Process: A General Overview*" (*El Proceso Penal: Una Perspectiva General*); both books are En Espanol/English.

Made available by *Legal Publications in Spanish*, PO Box 623, Palisades Park, NJ 07650. Tel: (800) 432-0004, Website: www.publeg.com — David Zapp's website is www.davidzapp.com.

Send requests for FREE copies to:

Zapp Materials, c/o November Coalition, 282 West Astor, Colville, WA 99114 or call (509) 684-1550.

Keith London, Prisoner Of The Drug War He Served His Country, Now He's Serving His Country's Time

By MARY MERRITT-LONDON

This is the story of how one family's life was turned upside down in a matter of months due to the government's decision to play a game with our lives. My young, hearing-impaired daughter dreams of the day her daddy comes home, crying for him nightly.

I will tell you how my husband, once a commended law enforcement officer, became the victim in a drug-sting that was designed and intended to lure unsuspecting citizens of particular ethnic heritage, just to see how many would become involved. This is our life, as it was, as it is, and how the justice system says it will be.

I met my husband, Keith, in 1992. He had just been stationed in Georgia after returning from a two and a half-year stay in Fulda, West Germany that included a tour of duty during Desert Storm. We began dating, and it wasn't long before we fell in love and got engaged to marry.

I was attending college nearby and raising a terminally ill infant, a child of a relative unable to provide this care. Keith loved this baby girl. Maybe that is why it was so easy to fall in love with him. We were both so young, but ready to do whatever was necessary to protect and raise this child as our own.

After we married, we adopted Tiana and had a baby girl, Jada. With two young children we went through life's struggles like any young family. Keith was often in the field, sent to Kuwait twice, and after two years of being away from family more than he was with us, he chose a career that would bring him home to his family after work — or so we thought.

Keith joined the Savannah (GA) Police Department in January 1996, allowing us to live near my ailing mother. He made friends with many people in the Police Academy, one a former sheriff's deputy who headed the class of rookies. This guy was charming, intelligent, and it seemed everyone trusted him.

Keith loved being a cop more than anything else, and more than all the things he'd ever done. He often worked 16-hour shifts, not complaining, as he would have in the military.

The former deputy sheriff, now one of Savannah's police officers, approached Keith with an offer to do some off-duty work. His connections with the Sheriff's department



Keith, his wife Mary and their daughter Jada during a prison visit

enabled him to have 'first dibs' on extra paying work. Keith would not know until too late that the cash he received 'had blood on it.'

The FBI sent a drug dealer named Walter Heyward into the city with large amounts of cash, directing him to hire police officers — African American only because, as related in FBI documents, "white officers would suspect something."

In court, Walter Heyward explained how he did his FBI-inspired work. He would first

approach an officer with a business card, complete with his phony business logo of E and T Imports. He would explain to job candidates that he hired for protection, needed security, but only employed law enforcement officers.

Keith was one of eleven officers who accepted part-time

work with E and T Imports, each becoming entangled in a conspiratorial net that would affect all of their lives, and those of their loved ones.

In September 1997, I heard a knock on my door that terrified me then, the memory of which inspires fear in me to this day. It was Keith's employer, along with at least ten FBI agents. Keith was arrested for aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine. I was stunned, my children stunned, our lives forever changed.

Two months later my husband was tried, convicted and sentenced to 17 and a half years in federal prison. He received the lowest sentence of all who went to trial, primarily because his lawyer admitted being a close friend of the judge, and convinced Keith not to testify in his own behalf — something he wanted to do so badly.

We appealed to higher courts, but to no avail. After spending over \$50,000 on legal fees, one lawyer told me that I would soon want the "comfort of a man."

Our daughter, Tiana, died at home after her father was sent to prison. She wanted Jesus to take away her pain, and her last words were, "Tell Daddy that everything will be okay soon, and that I love him."

Jada, now 11 years old, continues longing for the day her father comes home.

Please help us in our fight for justice. You can write Keith at:

Keith London 09595-021
FCI Yazoo City - Medium
PO Box 5888
Yazoo City, MS 39194

Note: November Coalition staff endeavors to verify the accuracy of these WALL stories, written by the prisoners themselves. However, November Coalition assumes no responsibility for the content of these stories. Credentialed media can be provided with documentation and family contacts if they wish to research a story. To do so, please contact media@november.org.

What You Can Do

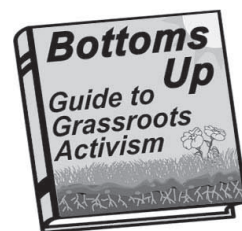
Why not host a public showing of the classic PBS *Frontline* documentary *SNITCH*, by Ofra Bikel? It's a great

way to initiate a conversation in your community about the injustice of the war on drugs.

We can send you a free copy of *SNITCH* on DVD or VHS tape. Just contact us at *SNITCH*, November Coalition, 282 West Astor, Colville, WA 99114, Ph: 509-684-1550, E-mail moreinfo@november.org.

For more on *SNITCH*, visit www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/snitch

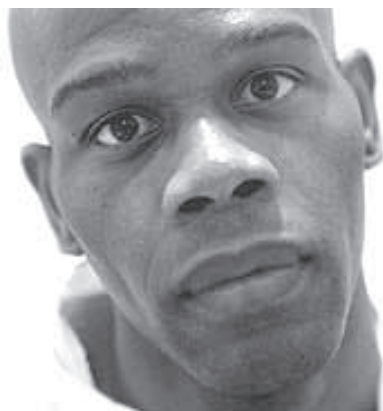
For more ideas and lessons on how to get active in your community, visit *Bottoms Up: Guide To Grassroots Activism* at www.november.org/BottomsUp.



THE FBI SENT A DRUG DEALER NAMED WALTER HEYWARD INTO THE CITY WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF CASH, DIRECTING HIM TO HIRE POLICE OFFICERS — AFRICAN AMERICAN ONLY BECAUSE, AS RELATED IN FBI DOCUMENTS, "WHITE OFFICERS WOULD SUSPECT SOMETHING."

Tyrone Brown — An Update

BY CHUCK ARMSBURY, SENIOR EDITOR



www.SaveMrBrown.com

What began routinely as another Internet story illustrating drug war injustice posted on November Coalition's *The WALL* in 2005 has become a national movement to free Tyrone Brown from a life sentence in a Texas prison. Locked up since 1990, Tyrone had written our office in July 2004, asking to have his version of courtroom events told to the world.

After confirming key facts and hearing more from Tyrone, we uploaded this story as expressed in prose and poetry to *The WALL* section of our website. on March 25, 2005. Brown told us he got life in prison for smoking marijuana while on probation for an armed robbery. He was 17 years of age then, sixteen years ago. He had no adult criminal history and a minor juvenile record.

Honestly, it was hard to believe Tyrone's story. Who gets life in prison for puffing the herb?

Brooks Egerton of the *Dallas Morning News* called our office not long after posting Tyrone's writing on *The WALL*. Like other reporters who have used *The WALL* to find a newsworthy drug war shocker, Egerton was stunned to read of Tyrone's life sentence and also questioned whether it was handed down for just smoking mj.

Egerton's Sunday feature article in the *Morning News* on April 23, 2006 confirmed that Judge Keith Dean had ordered Tyrone — a poor, black teenager — to serve life in prison for "just smoking weed" while on a 10-year probation. "Good Luck, Mr. Brown," Judge Dean said after pronouncing sentence.

During his investigation, Egerton found that Judge Dean had given a 10-year deferred sentence (probation) to a privileged, coked-out white man (Alex Woods) who had murdered a male prostitute by shooting him in the back, and who repeatedly violated terms of probation

without suffering consequences. Egerton's black/white contrast in judicial fairness couldn't have been expressed sharper.

Our office began hearing from concerned, compassionate people from Texas, Florida, Michigan, New Mexico, and California immediately following Egerton's expose'. A few months later this trickle of outrage became a torrent of nationwide indignation following the airing of *ABC TV's 20/20* on November 3, 2006 that affirmed Egerton's conclusions and added more. *ABC* filmed Tyrone's armed robbery victim, a white man who told *20/20* that Tyrone never hurt him, and later returned his wallet, minus the \$2 pickup money.

Bill Hathaway, the robbery victim, has echoed public outrage about the case, admitting he didn't know about Mr. Brown's sentence until *The Morning News* contacted him earlier this year and said then: "You have got to be kidding me."

A score of the most outraged viewers of the *20/20* Special phoned or emailed November Coalition, called each other, spoke with friends and soon organized to mobilize the *Save Mr. Brown* campaign. A young graduate student in medicine and business created the initial informational website (www.savemrbrown.com) in the night after viewing the *20/20* episode. The core organizing team for *Save Mr. Brown* includes both Nora Callahan and myself.

On November 7, 2006 Judge Keith Dean lost his bid for re-election. Contacted previously by *Save Mr. Brown* volunteers in Texas and Florida, once-reluctant Judge Dean has now come forward and agreed to endorse clemency for Tyrone Brown. County Prosecutor Bill Hill has also consented to sign papers petitioning Governor Rick Perry for an executive order releasing Tyrone to time served.

Judge Keith Dean "contacted my office about this case several months ago, shortly after the *Dallas Morning News* ran a story about it. Dean told me that he wanted Brown to receive a time cut, but that he did not want to be the one to initiate it," Hill said in the latest *Dallas Morning News* story, 12/09/06, by Brooks Egerton.

"It is the belief of this office that Mr. Brown has paid his debt for this crime, and that life imprisonment is too harsh a penalty," Mr. Hill wrote in his public statement to the *Morning News*.

"Among private citizens," wrote Egerton, "who have urged the governor to commute Mr. Brown's sentence is O.S. Hawkins, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas. He is a longtime friend of Alex Woods' family, and testified on the killer's behalf during a trial that preceded the guilty plea." "If there seems to ever have been unequal justice, it has been

Hello everyone —

Just a note to let you know I wrote to Tyrone, and much to my surprise received a letter back from him last week. He is in very good spirits and is hopeful about his future. Tyrone has a wonderful sense of humor and, as anyone can see from his poetry, has a great way with words. Just delightful.

Since I live in Dallas, he gave me his mother's phone number, and I contacted her yesterday. Nora Mae Brown is a gracious, lovely woman — and she is extremely hopeful as well. They are overwhelmed with the response from all over the country and so grateful to everyone for what's happening now.

I didn't ask her any details about the status, but she's hoping to have Tyrone home by Christmas! Realistically, she doesn't know if that will happen, of course.

But I was encouraged to hear the joy of a hopeful mother.

I wanted to share this with all of you who care so much and who have worked so diligently toward this effort.

Happy Holidays — JJ Davis

(Editor — This email letter arrived 12/14/06 while tweaking final draft of Winter 2007 *Razor Wire* before printing. Expressed here are common feelings of many people across the nation determined to see Tyrone free.)

meted in Mr. Brown's situation," Dr. Hawkins told the governor in an April 2006 letter.

As this *Razor Wire* goes to press, we don't know how Governor Rick Perry will respond to this unusual public outcry for Tyrone's release. Perry doesn't grant many commutations. Whatever his decision, *Save Mr. Brown* campaigners expect justice, and are determined to continue this 'equal justice' campaign if Perry denies our appeal for clemency and immediate release.

Save Mr. Brown campaigners are likewise pledged to be a main force for helping Tyrone and his family through the difficult months after release. Optimism runs high that Perry will do the right thing, and allow the waters of love from family and friends to wash down every day on this deserving man.

To learn more about Tyrone Brown's case, including full Egerton articles:

www.november.org/thewall/cases/brown-ty/brown-ty.html

And to contact the *Save Mr. Brown* campaign: www.savemrbrown.com.



Tyrone with his daughter, Elaine, during a rare prison visit. This grainy Polaroid was the only photo Tyrone had of him and his daughter together when he sent it to us for posting on *The WALL*. After scanning, we promptly returned it.

November Coalition History: Years 2000 - 2006

(CONTINUED FROM SUMMER 2006 RAZOR WIRE)

November Coalition brought its mission and message to Philadelphia's Shadow Convention of August 2000. Nora Callahan and Chuck Armsbury from Colville, Washington teamed up with Mary Gaines of Federal Forum St. Paul, MN, and other volunteers from New York City, Detroit, MI and Cleveland Ohio to arrange for two dozen children of the drug war to be brought by bus to Philadelphia.

Children of the Drug War meet press and public at Philly Shadow Convention, August 2, 2000



by Chilean secret agents on DC's Embassy Row in 1976. Congressman John Conyers of Michigan presented the medallion, memorializing the Coalition's humble origins — 'Out of a Colville kitchen, comes a national organization.'

Acceptance of the IPS Letelier-Moffitt award put the Coalition's condemnation of the drug war up for consideration by human rights organizations and

progressive reformers not previously familiar with the excesses caused by drug prohibition. Likewise, Coalition leaders were able to introduce its U.S. members to the international features of the war on drugs, especially as it is conducted in Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America.

The Jubilee Justice 2000 signatures were collected until Clinton left office. 41,000 names were presented to Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) after Coalition organizers attended the IPS awards event in October 2000. Though there was no mass release of prisoners as demanded, we were able to meet other limited objectives of the Jubilee Justice campaign. As the last petitions were mailed from Washington State to Washington DC, organizers looked with positive expectation to the larger map of alliances created across the U.S. that unite diverse communities of interest around drug war issues.

Several leading members of the U.S. Congress, including Rep. John Conyers, seated on the powerful House Judiciary Committee, could now point to substantial support for release of drug war prisoners. More than 800 citizens from around the world gathered batches of signatures. Another 1,200 families, including scores with Spanish surnames, became involved, and over 2,000 prisoners filled at least one sheet of signatures, all demonstrating they saw the election-year possibility and were appealing as one voice for mercy and working for justice for all drug war prisoners. Clinton pardoned about 36 prisoners, most of them

were prisoners of the drug war, and some were members of the November Coalition.

In 2001 the Coalition launched "Open The Can: A CANpaign For Freedom". Based on the concept that prisoners were packed into our nation's prisons like sardines, the project involved special labels, applied to sardine cans, and sent to elected officials in Washington, DC. Hundreds of sardine cans were sent to



Washington until September 11, 2001 and the anthrax scare chilled the reception of Congressional mail in the U.S. Capitol. Artwork was provided by prisoner Henry Potwin.

With a staff of three and faithful volunteers, the Coalition publishes a newspaper, maintains a website, and coordinates national volunteers who develop their activism in a broad array of activities suiting time constraints, talents and locales.

The home office coordinates and provides event speakers, responds to media requests, and each week processes scores of letters received. In a broader sense, the office is also a type of historical archive that chronicles the human suffering caused by prohibition, over-zealous law enforcement, guideline sentencing and inhumane prison conditions. Citizens can order an array of supplies — most provided at little or no cost to the volunteers that work diligently to meet the common goal of ending drug war injustice.

Heralding four hard years of organizing, on June 3, 2001, Nora Callahan was honored with the Robert C. Randall Award for Achievement in the Field of Citizen Action. This prestigious award from the Lindesmith/Drug Policy Foundation (now the Drug Policy Alliance) caps a four-year story of success building on success for Nora, staff and regional volunteers in the Coalition.

In the spring of 2002, November Coalition volunteers began circulating a Petition for Relief from Drug War Injustice calling for restoration of an early release system (parole and/or good-time) for federal prisoners. By mid-summer Representative Patsy Mink (D-HI) had

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

These African-American children, from toddlers to teens, shared stories in song and poetry — before a large live audience and attending national and international press — about what it means for poor, black children to be without a mother, or a close family member, who is in prison for a drug law violation.

The idea for a Shadow Convention originated from national drug reform leaders like Ethan Nadelmann and prominent entertainment figures like Arianna Huffington, Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins, who foresaw that neither Democratic (meeting in Los Angeles) nor Republican (meeting in Philadelphia) parties would include any drug reform planks in their convention platforms in 2000.

To highlight this bi-partisan neglect, drug war activists united with other social reformers to organize unique forums on the drug war, income inequality and campaign finance reform. Each four-day "convention" (first in Philadelphia, then Los Angeles shortly after) at a nearby site in each city "shadowed" the major parties as they convened to nominate candidates and approve platform statements. It was also a time that class and race did not divide us, and some long term relationships began.

In October 2000 the November Coalition was honored by the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) for mobilizing significant grassroots support against the drug war. The handsome medallion accepted by Director Nora Callahan on behalf of the Coalition is called the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award in honor of two IPS colleagues slain



Nora Callahan, Executive Director of the November Coalition, accepts the Domestic Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award from the Honorable U.S. Rep. John Conyers (D-MI)



Signing the Petition For Relief From Drug War Injustice; Journey for Justice, Durham, NC, March 7, 2003

TNC HISTORY ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

introduced a bill to revive parole. A few short weeks later, the honorable Patsy Mink had passed away due to complications from chicken pox.

By autumn of 2002, the November Coalition's director, Nora Callahan and Chuck Armsbury, the editor of *The Razor Wire*, began an extensive series of road trips throughout the continental United States. They collected petition signatures, recruited other leaders to do the same and urged the public to "Meet the people behind the statistics that rank the United States of America world's leading jailer." Potlucks, college presentations, church Sunday school and formal services allowed the public and members to meet each other, and join a growing social justice movement.

"Journey for Justice springs from the extreme need and aspirations of thousands of drug war prisoners and their loved ones victimized by unjust drug and sentencing laws," Chuck Armsbury wrote of it. "We Journey for Justice to fortify resolve and awaken the dignity of ordinary people assaulted daily by a drug war that isn't a war on drugs - but a war on people."

By the conclusion of the first series of November Coalition sponsored Journeys for Justice at the end of 2003 and 30,000 miles — *Bottoms Up: Guide To Grassroots Activism*, an online guide to citizen action, would be updated to include the collective experience of more than 100 organizers who participated in bringing Nora Callahan and Chuck Armsbury to their town. It was also properly named.

The national office that was housed in a small home in a residential neighborhood for over seven years moved to its' own facility mid-2004. Offices are now located in a historic building in the heart of Colville, WA.



The Journey for Justice: Washington DC, November 1, 2002

Originally a church built in the 1920's, the building was restored in 1977 to house the North Country Co-Op, one of the first Natural Food Stores owned cooperatively in the U.S., and in business for over 25 years.

By year's end 2004, the November Coalition reached 98,000 signatures of support for earned early release or return to federal parole. Several bills in the U.S. Congress demonstrate that support grows for the notion, and support is behind the sentiments and demands that November Coalition members express.

Journey for Justice 2005 united a profoundly broad base of prison reform, abolitionists, drug law activists and formerly incarcerated people to embark on a March on Washington DC on August 13th. The November Coalition served the criminal justice reform alliance by designing and maintaining a website and electronic communications that brought together over 120 groups, and hundreds of leaders that have planned projects and strategies into year 2006.

Before autumn 2005 was in full swing, the first annual retreat and workshop of the Washington State Drug Policy Coordinating Group was hosted at the offices and multipurpose facility of the Coalition. The desire



March on DC: August 13, 2005, Lafayette Park, Washington, DC

to host low cost conferences and workshops became a reality. Visit "Our House" online today and watch our progress.

Early 2006, the group launched an online storefront to offer natural soap, a superior product that everyone needs. The group urges friends and supporters across the country to use November's Natural Soap because, "clean and pure cleans best," and a purchase supports important work.

Supporting prisoners and their loved ones' mission to educate the public and urge sentencing reform is work accomplished under the burden of devastating, long-term incarceration. Sales of November's Natural Soap supplements the tireless support of single-parent households, elderly retired couples, and those who are in prison.

You might not be able to be at November Coalition's facility — painting, or pounding nails, laminating posters, making & labeling soap, processing prisoner mail — but you can be a virtual partner. We invite everyone to help us commemorate our 10 years of progress and the solemn nature of our mission. It's easy to be involved.

The November Coalition steadfastly relies on public support, your membership, donations or gifts are appreciated and tax deductible.

More Local Scenes

Speakers Target Criminal Injustice System

Rodney Lewis spent almost four years in a Connecticut prison, most of it in maximum security. At a packed public hearing on prison reform in August of 2006, in the the New Haven City Hall Alderman Chambers, he testified, "Every time they put the cuffs and chains on me, I would lose a piece of myself, of my dignity." And that wasn't the worst part. He described the isolation, the humiliations, the threats and harassment by the guards.

The forum was sponsored by People Against Injustice, a New Haven-based criminal justice reform group, and organized by Barbara Fair

(pictured here reading a letter from a prisoner describing abysmal prison conditions). Fair is perhaps Connecticut's most passionate opponent of the war on drugs, which puts thousands of mostly non-violent criminals behind bars in Connecticut alone.

Source: *New Haven Independent (CT)*

People Against Injustice, PO Box 1035, New Haven, CT 06504, Ph: (203)787-5262, E-mail: peopleagainstinjust@earthlink.net, Website: www.yale.edu/slam/pai.html



Rodney Lewis



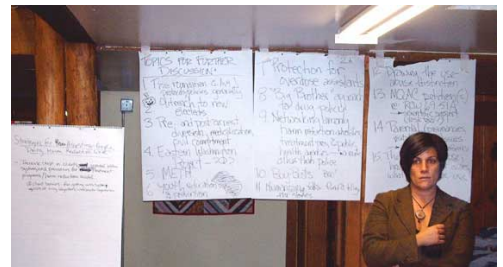
Barbara Fair

2nd Annual Washington State Drug Policy Workshop



SPONSORED BY THE
WA STATE ACLU AND
MANY ALLIED GROUPS

OCTOBER 28-29,
2006, AT NOVEMBER
COALITION'S 'OUR
HOUSE', COLVILLE, WA



Allison Holcomb of the WA ACLU Drug Policy Project facilitated and took notes



Music on the catwalk



I Got Published!

OCTOBER 23, 2006 - ARIZONA REPUBLIC (AZ)

Fill The Jails, Fail The Victims

Voters: Beware of unintended consequences and vote "no" on Proposition 301. If this proposition passes, it would deny hundreds of people the opportunity for drug treatment and would clog our prisons with more non-violent addicts.

A study was done recently in Nebraska for the Department of Correctional Services (reported in The Republic). It showed that the get-tough meth law that took effect there last year, combined with normal expected growth in the prison population, will require many additional prison beds and will cost millions.

Where will the funding come from for the Arizona Department of Corrections if this proposition passes?

Treatment for all addicts is far more cost-effective than incarceration, and certainly more humane. The 1996 voter-approved Drug Medicalization, Prevention and Control Act, which provides probation and treatment for low-level drug offenders, must continue to be honored. And it has saved millions of tax dollars.

Let's give low-level, non-violent meth users the chance to participate in a successful, proven drug treatment program. Don't discriminate. Meth addiction is treatable. Judges already have the authority to sentence all violent offenders to prison. It is overzealous prosecutors who want to further their conviction rate for political purposes that have convinced legislators to re-write the original voter-approved initiative.

In 1996, Arizona voters got it right the first time!

Roma Thomas, Sun City West

DECEMBER 3, 2006 - ST. PETERSBURG TIMES (FL)

A Futile Fight

Since Milton Friedman's death last month, I have searched major U.S. online newspapers for opinion pieces about his stand against the drug war and found nothing, except a column by Robyn Blumner.

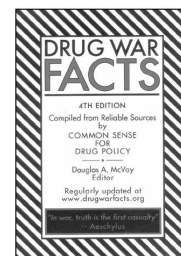
How can the mainstream media write reams about the successes of his many policy recommendations but ignore this one? Do they believe the drug war is a success, that his stand against the drug war was his one mistake?

No. I think they know the drug war is bad policy, but it has been going on so long that it supports the careers, stock portfolios and campaign contributions of many well-placed people. Simply put, the drug war is too controversial for most columnists, editorial writers and publishers.

John Chase, Palm Harbor

Prisoners: Get The Facts!

Send us a copy of your published editorial or letter — you'll receive a free copy of the 5th Edition of *Drug War Facts!* (Published by Common Sense for Drug Policy — www.drugwarfacts.org)



DECEMBER 10, 2006 - ST. PETERSBURG TIMES (FL)

Prohibition's Problems

Re: Remember Alcohol, Dec. 3, Letter

Life with legalized drugs is bad, but life with prohibition is even worse.

The writer could have made his case even stronger by reminding us that national prohibition of alcohol was accompanied by reduced death rates from alcoholism and cirrhosis of the liver (See Dr. Clark Warburton's 1932 book *The Economic Results of Prohibition*).

So what were Americans thinking when they ended national Prohibition? Consider this, from the 1930 resolution of the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform: "... National Prohibition, wrong in principle, has been equally disastrous in consequences in the hypocrisy, the corruption, the tragic loss of life and the appalling increase of crime which have attended the abortive attempt to enforce it; in the shocking effect it has had upon the youth of the nation; in the impairment of constitutional guarantees of individual rights; in the weakening of the sense of solidarity between the citizen and the government, which is the only sure basis of a country's strength."

Those women knew life was better and safer with legal alcohol than life with illegal alcohol because they'd lived it both ways. They learned that driving a popular drug underground causes more societal damage than it prevents.

Priscilla M. Chase, Palm Harbor



Mail Call

My husband and I are currently incarcerated in the federal system. I am doing 4 years in Pekin, IL and he was sentenced to 20 years in Oxford, WI. It is my first time ever in trouble, and his second time. We have drug charges. We were set up by a "good friend". We had no drugs on us — we were just audio taped discussing drugs with a confidential informant.

There are 320 women in this prison camp, most with drug charges. Mostly first offences, and most have 3 - 20 years. We've all left our children behind, and they are the ones who suffer most. It's very sad to listen to all the different stories.

Beth Cresswell-Shearin

In April of last year, the ATF set up a "controlled buy" in my neighborhood. I made a phone call and got some speed for the agents — they got me and two friends. We aren't dealers or traffickers or kingpins, we were addicts. The DOJ condones this activity, and the government is its incubator. It's repulsive.

My answer is that I am studying law; I'm going to be a lawyer. I can envision a whole law firm of ex-felons — now wouldn't that be something? I look forward to working with the November Coalition in the future.

Sincerely, Kurt

I'm a federal inmate at Greenville FCI, and took notice of the letter in your Summer 2006 issue concerning Ion Spectrometry Machines. Problems with these machines are apparently not isolated to any one institution. My 67-year-old mother was one of many innocent visitors turned away.

We are curious what others are doing to voice their complaints. We have exhausted BOP administrative remedies, with expected results. I also wrote the ACLU, who replied that they were concerned, but lacked the resources to handle individual cases.

Surely, between all the BOP facilities using these devices, there must be hundreds or thousands of visitors being falsely accused. Perhaps a Freedom Of Information Act request could produce some numbers. I've heard of six in one day here at Greenville.

Let's all make our voices heard!

Randall Stoneburner

I personally thank you for your commitment to ending the war on drugs. I am baffled how this country declares war on its own people, and then supplies the drugs to continue the war effort.

I was charged, tried and convicted of first degree murder. In a constant search for better drugs, I met a girl, and thought life was great. She sold some heroin to someone, they sold it to someone else — now that someone else is dead. Though many were involved, I was the only one charged, and I never even met this individual. He overdosed, and the state held me responsible.

I've scratched my head for years trying to figure out this hateful system. I may not be society's greatest, but I am no killer.

Respectfully, Michael Aumuller

World Bank/UN Report Offers Grim Assessment of Afghanistan Opium Battle — Winning Will Take Decades, Not Years

The effort to wipe out opium production has achieved limited success at best, hurt the poorest Afghans, and riddled the government with corruption from top to bottom, according to a comprehensive report released November 28, 2006 by the United Nations and the World Bank.

World Bank report *"Afghanistan's Opium Economy"* says the counter-narcotics effort in Afghanistan is failing, and the presence of opium in the national economy is so great that it infiltrates not only the economy, but the Afghan State, politics, and society. Providing a real alternative will take decades, not years, the study warns.

GOVERNORS, PROVINCIAL CHIEFS, DISTRICT POLICE CHIEFS — PEOPLE LIKE THESE WERE TASKED WITH ERADICATION OR INTERDICTION, BUT THEY USED THEIR POWER TO TARGET THEIR OPPOSITION OR COMPETITION. ESSENTIALLY, LOCAL ACTORS WERE ABLE TO CAPTURE COUNTER-NARCOTICS EFFORTS AND USE THEM TO NOT ONLY CONSOLIDATE CONTROL AND POWER OVER THE DRUG INDUSTRY, BUT ALSO INCREASE THEIR POLITICAL POWER. COUNTER-NARCOTICS POLICY IS BEING PERVERTED TO HELP CREATE A NEW DISTRIBUTION OF POWER IN AFGHANISTAN.

Afghanistan produced 6,100 tons of opium this year — enough to make 610 tons of heroin — and in line to produce even more next year. Opium accounts for at least one-third of the Afghan GDP, and profits from the trade end up in the pockets of government ministers, warlords, traffickers, and Islamic radicals alike. But with opium employing 13% of the workforce, it is also farmers, rural laborers, transporters, and gunmen — and their families — who earn a living off the trade.

Efforts to eradicate opium crops have the greatest adverse impact on the poor, the study found. If alternative development is going to take hold in the country, planners must keep that in mind, said Alastair McKechnie, World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan.

"Efforts to discourage farmers from planting opium poppy should be concentrated in localities where land, water, and access to markets are such that alternative livelihoods are already available," he argued. "Rural development programs are needed throughout the country and should not be focused primarily on opium areas, to help prevent cultivation from further spreading."

"The critical adverse development impact of actions against drugs is on poor farmers and rural wage laborers," said William Byrd, World Bank economist and co-editor of the report. "Any counter-narcotics strategy needs to keep short-run expectations modest, avoid worsening the situation of the poor, and adequately focus on longer term rural development."

"History teaches us that it will take a generation to render Afghanistan opium-free," said Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of

UNODC, who used the release of the report to argue for a dual approach of aid and repression. "But we need concrete results now," he said, proposing to double the number of opium-free provinces from six to 12 next year.

"I therefore propose that development support to farmers, the arrest of corrupt officials and eradication measures be concentrated in half a dozen provinces with low cultivation in 2006 so as to free them from the scourge of opium. Those driving the drug industry must be brought to justice and officials who support it sacked."

Despite his tough talk, what Costa did not say was that his proposal amounted to recognition that effective eradication is impossible in the primary opium-producing provinces of the country this year. Although the World Bank/UN report barely mentions them, a resurgent Taliban, grown rich — like everyone else — on the profits of protecting the trade, has been a big reason why.

"Now that the control is more in the hands of the Taliban and their supporters, there is less hope for eradication, and more people are involved and looking to make money. The chances for success are not good," said Raheem Yaseer of the University of Nebraska-Omaha Center for Afghanistan Studies.

"I am less optimistic than I was even a few weeks ago," Yaseer told *Drug War Chronicle*. "The British were talking a lot about concentrating on eradication in Helmand province, but they didn't do much because they were too busy fighting the Taliban. If nothing is done, it will be worse next year."

Those trying to get rid of opium will be up against not only the Taliban but also elements of the government itself. "This report emphasizes the way counter-narcotics efforts have been manipulated and perverted to result in a concentration of power," said Brookings Institution expert on illicit substances and military conflict, Vanda Felbab-Brown.

"Governors, provincial chiefs, district police chiefs — people like these were tasked with eradication or interdiction, but they used their power to target their opposition or competition," she told the *Chronicle*. "Essentially, local actors were able to capture counter-narcotics efforts and use them to not only consolidate control and power over the drug industry, but also increase their political power. Counter-narcotics policy is being perverted to help create a new

distribution of power in Afghanistan."

The report also confirms some emerging trends that signal even more trouble in the future, Felbab-Brown noted. "One of the things confirmed in the report is the increasing concentration and hierarchical organization of the drug economy in Afghanistan," she said. "This has been a trend that the report confirms is taking place."

The warlords and commanders are vanishing from the visible drug economy. They no longer trade directly; these guys with positions of power inside the government are instead now taking protection money. They are not directly participating in the trade, but they are still participating."

The UN's Costa can call for six more opium-free provinces, and the Americans with the Karzai government can daydream about success through chemical eradication. But this sobering document from the sober people at the World Bank and the UN is just the latest to send a strong signal that the global drug prohibition regime has tied itself in knots in Afghanistan.

Source: *Drug War Chronicle*, Issue #463, 12/01/06

What About Legal Uses For Heroin?

BY DAVID BORDEN, EX. DIRECTOR, DRCNET

This is a good question — even in the context of a prohibitionist system there is no rational justification for treating heroin differently from morphine as far as pain management. Heroin is derived from morphine through a chemical process. There are other opiates that are legal for medical use that are as strong or stronger than heroin.

Unfortunately, pain treatment is itself in a painful situation. Pain patients face much bigger obstacles to obtaining appropriate treatment than the ban on heroin prescribing. If heroin is made legally available for medical use — but the overall pain treatment situation does not change — it will just be another drug that isn't used in most of the situations where it should be.

Conversely, fixing the pain-prescribing problem for the other opiates will do most of what is needed for pain patients, though some patients would be better served with heroin. I think it is important to make heroin available for pain treatment, but there's a bigger war going on in that arena. For most recent coverage, see www.stopthedrugwar.org/topics/drug_war_issues/medicine/

(Editor: Also review pain patient Richard Paey's story and cartoons at: www.november.org/cartoons/)



88-Year-Old Woman Gunned Down By Drug Squad

Two days before Thanksgiving, an Atlanta narcotics team crashed through the door of 88-year-old Kathryn Johnston in a 'no-knock' drug raid. Johnston, a "feeble and frightened woman" who lived alone, according to her friends and neighbors, apparently heard police breaking through the burglar bar before taking down her front door. Johnston, an African-American, fired a revolver and five shots struck the officers as they rushed in the door. The police, heavily armored and only slightly injured, returned fire. Ms. Johnston was killed instantly.

The tragedy began with a no-knock warrant stating that an unnamed informant had bought crack cocaine from a man at the house, giving police the authority to burst through the door without warning.

But in an interview with a local FOX-TV affiliate in late November, the informant, whose identity was concealed, said he had never been to the house in question and had not bought drugs there.

"They were going to pay me just to cover it up," he claims. "They called me immediately after the shooting to ask me — I mean to tell me, 'This is what you need to do.'" He added that the officers told him explicitly that he was needed to protect their story.

The informant's claim has resulted in the suspension of the entire narcotics team, and prompted the FBI and local US Attorney to open their own investigations. Police Chief Richard Pennington has also announced a review of the Atlanta Police Department's policies on the use of no-knock warrants and confidential informants.

Source: *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (GA)

Groom Dies In Hail Of Police Bullets On His Wedding Day

Sean Bell, 23, an African-American man leaving a night club in Queens, NY after attending his bachelor party, died on November 25 after police opened fire on his car. Bell's friends, Joseph Guzman, 31, and Trent Benefield, 23, were both seriously injured. All were unarmed, according to *The New York Times*.

Over 50 shots were fired by five undercover officers documenting narcotics and prostitution at the club. Police claims of justification have fallen on deaf ears. Now an angry community wants answers.

About 400 people gathered the next day across from the hospital where Bell was

pronounced dead to hear speeches from community leaders. In the crowd was Bell's fiancée, Nicole Paultre. Tears trickled down the face of their 3-year-old daughter, Jordyn. New York City Councilman Charles Barron has promised "an explosion in the community," and said "every one of those police officers should be in jail for the rest of their lives, and after they die, they should go straight to hell."

"We are here because this could have been us," Rev. Al Sharpton told the crowd. "We've got to understand that all of us were in that car."

CA Prison Health System In Receivership

The court-appointed receiver overseeing the \$1.5 billion California prison medical system has promised to have federal marshals raid the state treasury to fix a problem he described as largely political, according to *The Sacramento Bee*.

In a riveting 1 1/2-hour presentation to the Little Hoover Commission, Robert Sillen said 65 inmates have been dying every year in the prison system due to poor medical care.

Sillen said the fatalities have continued even since his appointment, and he told the government watchdog panel about a death earlier this year in which a quadriplegic inmate with a colostomy bag and internal catheter fell into a coma with a 109-degree temperature and died after an 11-hour van ride in July heat. No medical personnel accompanied the inmate on the trip.

Sillen said the root of the prison health care problem is political, with not enough people in state government willing to tackle the crisis.

Under questioning from commission members, Sillen said he expects his receivership to last upwards of several years and that when he is finished, he expects to have established a prison health care system similar to a major private system such as Kaiser.

Study: Over 50% Of Prisoners Have Mental Health Problems

More than half of all prison and jail inmates, including 56 percent of state prisoners, 45 percent of federal prisoners and 64 percent of local jail inmates, were found to have a mental health problem, according to a study published in September by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

The report, "*Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates*" (NCJ-213600) can be found at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/mhppji.htm

Border Agents Imprisoned For Shooting, Cover-Up

Two U.S. Border Patrol agents watching the Mexican border last year stopped a van carrying marijuana. The driver fled back across the Rio Grande — with a gunshot wound in his

buttocks. Federal prosecutors convinced a jury in March that the agents had shot a defenseless man and schemed to cover it up. The agents' description about what had occurred was contradicted by other agents who arrived on the scene. One testified that one of the accuse agents had admitted to picking up shotgun casings to cover up the fact that he fired at the smuggler.

Walter Boyaki, an attorney representing the alleged smuggler, commended federal prosecutors for having the courage to carry on with a politically unpopular case, and argued that if the agents had not been punished, it would have "put a bull's-eye on every illegal alien." The smuggler has sued the federal government for \$5 million, claiming he was permanently injured.

"Federal agents do not get to shoot unarmed people as they are running away in the back and then lie about it and cover it up," said Johnny Sutton, U.S. attorney for Texas' Western District.

Source: *Los Angeles Times* (CA)

Former Thai Prime Minister To Be Tried For Drug War Killings

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Lawyers Council of Thailand are pressing the government to try deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra for crimes against humanity.

The Thaksin administration is accused of having blood on its hands for waging its so-called war on drugs, which killed more than 2,500 people, most of them accused drug traders and traffickers.

Law enforcement officials were allegedly obeying a Thaksin policy which included a "license to kill" when it came to drug crimes.

"Saddam Hussein, former president of Iraq, was charged with committing crimes against humanity for the killing of 170 people. In this case, the 2,500 deaths we witnessed here must constitute crimes against humanity," Somchai Hom-laor, chairman of the NHRC human rights cabinet, told *The Bangkok Post*.

Children Handcuffed, Dog Killed In Misdemeanor Pot Raid

A police strike team raided Anita Woodyear's Schenectady, NY apartment, handcuffed her children and killed her dog in September. The woman called it excessive force and a case of mistaken identity, but officers said they have no reason to apologize, and claimed they raided the house because Woodyear's 18-year-old son, Israel, sold \$60 worth of marijuana there.

"I heard a big boom. My first reaction was to jump out of bed. We were trying to find where our kids were at and all of a sudden we had guns in our faces," Woodyear, an African-American woman, told the *Albany Times-Union*.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

During the ensuing chaos, police handcuffed two of the woman's children, Elijah, 11, and 12-year-old Victoria, sprayed Victoria with pepper spray, and shot at her dog in the kitchen before killing it in the bathroom, Woodyear said.

"That seems like an awful lot of firepower for marijuana," said Fred Clark of the Schenectady chapter of the NAACP. "That's like spending \$125,000 for \$5."

Freedomwalk: An Annual Exercise In Undoing Racism

Since 1996, the GA Prison & Jail Project has led a sojourn through Southwest Georgia. The Freedomwalk is not a trip on a tour bus; it's not a visit to honorable, historic sites. Instead, it is a humble 85-mile journey that calls attention to abuses in the Southwest Georgia criminal justice system. The stops include prisons built to house 1500 "criminal aliens;" courthouses where harsh sentences are passed; small, suffocating jails, which meet no standard of building, health, plumbing, or fire code, and yet imprison human beings — mainly young, African American men as they await their trial and sentencing.

US Department of Justice numbers show that Georgia rates first among all states with 6.8% of its adults in prison, jail, on probation or parole. Three of every four Georgia prisoners are African Americans. In many of the state's 150 county jails, 9 of every 10 prisoners are African American. The Freedomwalk visits many of those jails.

This year's Freedomwalk took place Sept. 10-16, and began and ended in Americus, GA. Walkers journeyed through Macon, Taylor, and Marion Counties, where vigils and rallies were held at different county jails, courthouses, and prisons along the way.

Source: Resist, Inc. (www.resistinc.org)

Mexico Orders Army Offensive Against Drug Gangs

Mexico's new government, struggling with rampant drug trafficking and crime, ordered thousands of troops to the western state of Michoacan on December 11, 2006 to fight drug cartels locked in a vicious turf war.

President Felipe Calderon's security cabinet said more than 5,000 soldiers and marines were being deployed to crack down on drug gangs in the state, a key air and sea transshipment point for U.S.-bound cocaine.

"We will establish control points on highways and secondary roads to limit drug trafficking, along with raids and arrests," Interior Minister Francisco Ramirez Acuna said.

The soldiers, accompanied by federal police, also would search for and destroy drug plantations in the state, famous for poppy and marijuana production, Ramirez Acuna said.

Almost 3,000 people — mostly drug gang members and police — have been killed in the past two years in escalating cartel wars across Mexico.

The conservative Calderon took office on December 1 and has vowed to stand up to the gangs, who are frequently better armed than

local police and have de facto control of some coastal areas and parts of the U.S.-Mexican border.

Hundreds of people have been killed in the once-tranquil state. Brutal drug gangs fighting for control of lucrative production and trafficking routes leave behind severed heads and mutilated corpses, reminding rival gangs and authorities who is in charge.

Source: Reuters News, feature by Gunther Hamm

US Supreme Court Upholds 55-year Marijuana Sentence

In the first week of December 2006, the US Supreme Court let stand the mandatory 55-year prison sentence that a lower court imposed on a man who was convicted of carrying a handgun during three marijuana deals in Utah.

By refusing to hear the case, the Supremes ensured that 27-year-old Weldon Angelos will spend just about the rest of his life behind bars for selling three eight-ounce bags of marijuana to an undercover informant.

As Angelos' attorney noted, "The sentence he will serve is harsher than the sentence for raping a child — or the sentence for detonating a bomb aboard an aircraft."

Even the federal judge who was required to issue the mandatory minimum sentence called it "unjust, cruel, and even irrational." Yet, the Highest Court let the sentence stand without comment.

Source: Marijuana Policy Project, www.mpp.org



Songs Of The Times

Rock legend Neil Young has for decades protested against the American status quo, both in his music and in his life. His latest foray into grassroots activism is his *Living With War Today* web site, where he auditions, then showcases "Songs Of The Times", a collection of anti-war and social justice music of the masses, and other cultural expressions of dissent.

Nora Callahan has her own contribution to this effort: *Our Own Kind*, a "folklypso" ballad about the abuses of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib Prison, Iraq. At last count, and without any fanfare on our part, *Our Own Kind* is at 243 out of 1000 in web listener popularity at Neil Young's web site.

Our Own Kind was written and performed by Nora Callahan, with musical accompaniment and arrangement by Katana Christen and Josh Spiegel

Find *Our Own Kind* at the *Songs Of The Times* web site, at: www.neilyoung.com/lwwtoday/lwvsongspage.html

Enjoy some of Nora's other musical performances at: www.november.org/LocalScenes

Our Own Kind

Across this land of America, prisons abound
Over 2 million citizens, in the bowels of hell
They're our own kind, been down a long time

Then went guards from US prisons, headed to Iraq
Unleashed on an unsuspecting people?
No, they've expected us, a long time, a long time ago

Not in Bush's America, he didn't like it one bit
Nor did Haider al-Abbadi, to have his manhood
In his own kind, what was on his friend's mind?

Not in his America, his soldiers stripped them down
Hoods on heads and limbs were bound, by our own kind
Our own kind. Our own kind

Just a few bad apples, fallen off the bush?
I wanna know how high is up, and that it's understood
It's his kind, and they're out of their minds

Guards and dogs and prisons; rape, torture, death
Happens every day in America, the leading jailer on Earth
It's our own kind, our own kind of design

Have we lost our minds? It's our own kind.

November Coalition At School Of Americas Vigil And Rally

By FR. TOM HEREFORD, NOVEMBER COALITION VOLUNTEER

What, you don't know about The School of Americas (SOA)? Well, here's an online history:

"The School of the Americas (SOA), in 2001 renamed the "Western Hemisphere Institute for

at the School of Assassins." (Source: www.soaw.org)

Since the School was expelled from Panama and found a home in Columbus, GA, USA, public records confirm growing protests demanding it be closed. This year, November 17-19, 2006, 22,000 people gathered outside the gates of the SOA to hold a protest and memorial vigil for the thousands of victims of graduates of the School. It was a weekend filled with information, solidarity and prayer.

On Friday afternoon a workshop was held entitled "*Prison Reform: Fixing the Criminal Justice System.*" Attorney Jessica Hoskins (my sister) and I led the workshop. Jess worked for 10 years as a Missouri Public Defender before going into private practice. I worked for 10 years as a Chaplain in Federal Prisons. Seventy-five to 100

power." The majority present agreed that standard definitions of crime used by the system couldn't fully represent the needs and desires of minorities, women and the poor — customarily not included in system process.

This approach was supported by statistical graphs (online and free for anyone to download and print at www.november.org/graphs),

THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTRY TODAY, JUDGES ARE EACH DAY DISPENSING JUSTICE IN THE SAME BASIC WAY: JAIL OR NOT DEPENDS ON WHOM YOU ARE IF YOU'RE CAUGHT. TO ENLIVEN THE JUDICIARY WE THINK THERE MUST BE INCREASED OPTIONS FOR RESTORATIVE OR REHABILITATIVE JUSTICE IN A US CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM CURRENTLY STUCK WITH MODELS OF RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE ONLY.



Fr. Tom Hereford (right) with Kay Hill of "Centering Prayer", a spiritual guidance group at FCC Coleman, FL

Security Cooperation," is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia. "Initially established in Panama in 1946, it was kicked out of that country in 1984 under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. Former Panamanian President, Jorge Illueca, stated that the School of the Americas was the "biggest base for destabilization in Latin America." The SOA, frequently dubbed the "School of Assassins," has left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned. Over its 59 years, the SOA has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people. Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared," massacred, and forced into refugee status by those trained

people attended the workshop, many knowing little about injustice in the "justice" system. (See sidebar for drug war connection to SOA.)

We began with definitions, realizing that everyone in prison is there because of the way we as a society define "criminal" and the way we define "justice." A well-received definition of crime supported by many was: "(n) word meaning the act of breaking the rules or ordinances imposed by the rich white men in

personal stories (www.november.org/thewall) and photos of some real people and their families who have suffered from the bias of the system, both federal and state.

The Public Defender system was established to help people below poverty lines (a single person with no dependents earning less than \$9,570/year). I live in Missouri, where each PD is hired to handle 235 cases per year, but the actual caseload in 2004 was 339 cases per year per attorney. This means, in practice, that a case must be closed in less than six hours' work.

In Friday's workshop Jess revealed that, in

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Outside the gates of Ft. Benning, GA, home to the infamous School Of The Americas (now called "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation")

Missouri, Public Defenders are first hired at \$33,792/year, with a top earning potential of \$52,452/year. A State Prosecutor starts at \$40-55,000/year and can earn as much as \$140,000/year. Because of high caseload and low salary, most PDs are new attorneys who may only spend a few years in the office before moving on, thereby creating a low level of experience available to many needy defendants. The Prosecutor's office is more attractive from a salary and caseload perspective, and more advantageous for someone wanting a political career.

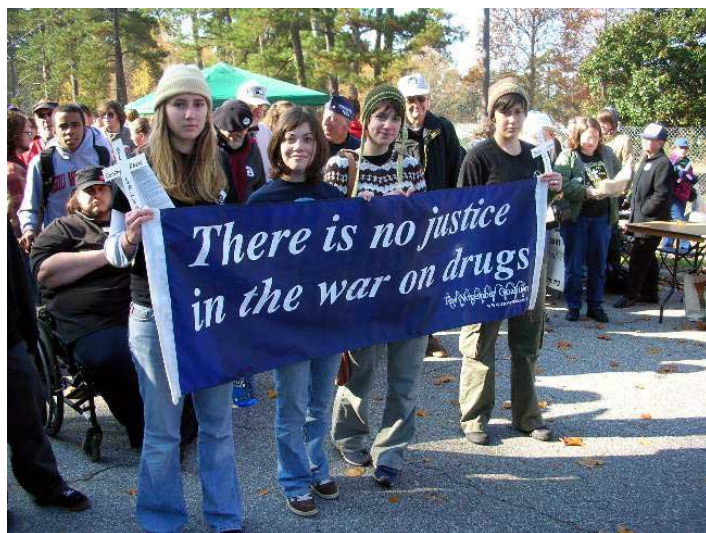
To illustrate systemic problems, Jess told workshop participants the true story of two different people who were, from the court's perspective, in the same situation. Jim and Jason had each been stopped for vehicular speeding. Each had an outstanding warrant due to a bad check. Each was arrested and taken to jail, but that is where similarities end.

Jim is a person of means; Jason is poor. And so Jim has means to post bond and get out of jail within hours, but Jason cannot. Jim does post bond, gets out of jail and deals with the issues monetarily, ending up with no

speeding record. He fixed the check, got placed on probation and his record was to be erased after successful completion of probationary period — and he'll have no points on his driver's license because speeding was changed to noisy exhaust.

Meanwhile, Jason sits in jail. Unable to post bond, he waits to learn his court date. He does call a neighbor to get his kids and take care of them until he's out. But his court date is weeks away, and so Jason loses his job, gets behind on his rent, his utilities are cut off AND he is racking up a boarding bill at the jail (up to \$34/day in Missouri).

Jason calls from jail about the speeding ticket and asks the court for an extension, which is granted, and a notice of the new court date



is mailed to Jason's home. He doesn't get the notice, misses the second court date and another warrant is issued. Also, because Jason is unavailable to care for his children, the Division of Family Services (DFS) picks up his children from the neighbor caring for them and then places them in foster care. After arrest,

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Drug Money Laundering At SOA

Major Joseph Blair retired from the U.S. Army in 1989 after 20 years of service, earning a Bronze Star for valor and five meritorious Service medals. Blair had been commissioned a lieutenant and dispatched to Vietnam. He was promoted to captain and assigned to general staff as assistant to then-Deputy Ambassador William F. Colby, the Saigon station chief and later CIA director (1954-75).

In 1986, he taught logistics to senior Latin American officers attending the Command and General Staff Course at the SOA, from which he received the highest possible ratings in performance reviews by his superiors until his retirement in 1989.

Blair has publicly criticized the SOA in newspaper articles and op/ed columns since 1993. In light of his impeccable credentials, service record and reputation, Blair's accusations, undergirded by willingness to accept responsibility for his own role, cannot be easily dismissed.

"Once it was transferred from Fort Gulick, Panama to Fort Benning, GA, the SOA became the best location in the U.S. for Latin American military officers to launder drug money and other funds obtained illegally in their Countries," charges Blair.

"Throughout the 1980s students attending the SOA routinely arrived with large quantities of U.S. cash which did not pass through any Latin American central banks. Every day of the week foreign soldiers, whose

commanding officers earn about \$1,000 a month, entered the U.S. with tens of thousands of dollars stuffed in their pockets, uniforms, duffel bags."

How does Blair know? "Hell, we helped them count the dough!"

The most egregious case, according to Blair, was the return of Peruvian Col. Vicente Campodonico in 1992, this time as an instructor. Records of his attendance in 1992 were destroyed. "He had been a student of mine, and he came back as a guest instructor. As his host I picked him up at the airport and brought him home. He began to stack bundles of cash on my kitchen table, and we counted over \$200,000. Campodonico said he wanted to buy a restaurant.

"Students received their official paychecks by mail from their country's attaché in Washington. They often handed senior guest instructors (who acted as purchasing agents) large amounts of cash, along with shopping lists from their superiors. In social settings, they'd discuss how their fellow officers enjoyed spending their 'plata de droga,'" said Blair.

"Of course narcotics were only one of many sources, including extortion, protection rackets, bribes and rake-offs from their own budgets. Occasionally, one would brag, 'hey, we take ten grand a pop for every plane that lands.'

"A big part of the attraction to studying or teaching at the SOA was the opportunity to shop. Visiting officers would get multiple-entry visas. If they were here five days, they'd spend

four shopping. We would take them on shopping sprees and they'd plunk down cash for cars, stereos, electronic equipment, appliances, computers, cameras, clothing, toys, jewelry and guns."

Guns were a popular item, says Blair. "The SOA had its own gun dealer on staff — a sergeant who got his federal license from the BATF and sold the students everything, including machine guns."

The death of Lt. Col. Julio Rivera, for Maj. Blair, raised particular concerns about the manipulation of SOA records and the role U.S. military may have played in aiding and abetting a flourishing drug trade. "Rivera had been in charge of logistics support for SOA students in the later 1980s," says Blair.

"A fellow retired officer called me in the spring of 1994 to say that Rivera had been caught dealing cocaine in El Salvador, where he was stationed as an advisor to the Salvadoran Army. When arrested, Rivera allegedly pulled the pin on a hand grenade and died in the conflagration."

"If true," Blair maintains, "the story raises the possibility that U.S. officers may have collaborated in narco trafficking schemes with the very forces they were supposed to train in drug interdiction."

Source: edited for length from article by W. E. Gutman, Connecticut-based investigative journalist, online at www.marrder.com/htw/special/politics/SOA3.htm

his car was towed to an impound yard, where it begins accumulating daily fees.

When he at last faces the judge, Jason has racked up a \$2700 boarding bill at the jail, been evicted from his apartment, lost his children and lost his job. The impounding bill now exceeds his car's value, and so he abandons it to the towing company. Unable to pay off the check immediately, Jason must plead guilty to a felony, and is sentenced to five years of probation. With no job, no car, and no place to live, Jason can't seem to live up to the rules of probation (which include having a job and a stable residence) and eventually ends up in prison.

For Jim, the situation was an embarrassing inconvenience. For Jason, it was a turning point in his life from which he may never recover. Throughout our country today, judges are each day dispensing justice in the same basic way: *jail or not depends on whom you are if you're caught*. To enliven the judiciary we think there must be increased options for Restorative or Rehabilitative Justice in a US criminal justice system currently stuck with models of Retributive Justice only.

Jess and I closed the workshop with **Steps You Can Take** — a few ideas and examples accessible from relevant Internet websites:

- **FIRST:** educate yourself about prisons and who's in them: november.org, curenational.org, fedcure.org, realcostofprisons.org and hrw.org/prisons

- **Educate others outside your friendly circle of common understanding:** don't just "preach to the choir." Figure out how to talk with people who may not know or agree with you easily — for example, members of an Elks or Moose Lodge, Women's Guild, Student Groups, Republican Women's Club, Church Groups, Chamber of Commerce.

- **Volunteer with others already active:** prisonervisitation.org, ministry/meditation/teaching in prison, prisoner letter writing, diocesan criminal justice ministries

- **Teach:** about Pre-Release, Re-Entry, Probation/Parole. Drug Court volunteers are usually needed to each Literacy, Financial Management, GED, AA or NA, Stress Management, Toastmasters, Anger Management, Job Skills/Interviewing, Self-Esteem, Parenting, Car/Home Maintenance, or whatever's needed to help someone learn skill

and stay out of trouble and jail.

- **Lobby for Big Changes:** learn how at november.org (drug law reform), cuadp.org (end the death penalty), fedcure.org (bring back federal parole), restorativejustice.org (healing, not cycles of revenge and despair), stopmax.org (stop the use of super max and solitary confinement)

- **Lobby for Small Changes:** NO jail time for traffic offenses, NO jail time for simple drug possession (80% of drug arrests are simple possession), NO 3-Strikes laws (these are people's lives, not a ballgame)

- **Restore Voting Rights:** OR never take them away. Count urban prisoners as residing at their home or release address, not as residents of the rural area where many are imprisoned, current practice causing underrepresentation of the poor generally, and people of color in particular.

- **PRAY:** Add prisoners to the prayers of the faithful, to prayer chains and lists. Pause in thought or pray for prisoners in whatever spiritual and religious group to which you belong.

"Remember those in prison as if you were in prison with them" (Hebrews 13:3)

Milton Friedman's Sensible Approach To Drug Policy

BY FROMA HARROP

This is about me, my mugger and Milton Friedman.

I was alone on a New York subway platform when a man started toward me. His glassy eyes foretold what was to happen. He pointed at the flute case I was carrying and said, "Give it to me."

Pulling the case back, I said "no," at which point he snapped open a knife and pointed it at my ribs. I then held out the flute, squeaking, "Take it." He grabbed the instrument and ran off.

I didn't need Milton Friedman, the Nobel laureate who died on Nov. 16, to explain the economics involved. My mugger obviously had a drug habit made very

expensive by the fact that his narcotic was illegal. Were his drug legal, he might have been able to buy it for the price of celery, in which case he wouldn't have needed me. He could have found the required change under seat cushions.

As a pure economic transaction, the mugging was most inefficient. The flute was a battered student model, so my assailant couldn't have gotten more than \$40 for it. I called the police to report the crime, which cost the taxpayers money. The bored officer at the other end asked the "what, when and where,"

then said, "OK, your case number is 5-0-3-7-7-3-1-4" and about five other digits. No one was hurt, and he still had to do the paperwork.

A free-market advocate, Friedman made respectable the idea that the drug trade is an unstoppable activity — and that laws prohibiting drugs were wasting billions of taxpayer dollars and hurting millions of innocent bystanders. Friedman became a hero to many good citizens

who did not care to stand between a drug addict and his fix. To Friedman, the war on drugs was not a moral crusade. It was just plain stupid.

In a famous 1989 open letter to Bill Bennett, drug czar under the first President

Bush, Friedman wrote:

"Your mistake is failing to recognize that the very measures you favor are a major source of the evils you deplore. Illegality creates obscene profits that finance the murderous tactics of the drug lords; illegality leads to the corruption of law-enforcement officials; illegality monopolizes the efforts of honest law forces so that they are starved for resources to fight the simpler crimes of robbery, theft and assault."

America now sends an estimated \$40 billion a year down the war-on-drugs rat hole. The innocents, meanwhile, keep piling up — from

burglarized homeowners to children caught in drug-turf crossfire. Every time law enforcement throws a drug seller in jail, it is making more business for the dealer's competitors.

Try this instead: Put the drug dealers and narco-terrorists out of business by providing free drugs to our addicted populations. That way, we know who the abusers are and can offer them treatment. And those who persist in their addictions wouldn't have to prey on the rest of us for their drug money.

Americans are unlikely to legalize drugs anytime soon, but they could decriminalize some of them. Marijuana is an excellent place to start. Pot appears to do little harm, and several states have tried to all but legalize it.

Friedman was a dues-paying member of the Marijuana Policy Project, which seeks to make marijuana a regulated legal product like cigarettes and alcohol.

One study suggests that ending the U.S. prohibition against marijuana could produce savings of nearly \$8 billion a year and generate over \$6 billion in tax revenues. Friedman and about 500 other leading economists endorsed the findings.

An enlightened drug policy is far off, but those who desire one should light a candle in memory of Milton Friedman.

Providence Journal columnist Froma Harrop's column appears regularly on editorial pages of The NY Times. Her e-mail address is fharrop@projo.com

A FREE-MARKET ADVOCATE, FRIEDMAN MADE RESPECTABLE THE IDEA THAT THE DRUG TRADE IS AN UNSTOPPABLE ACTIVITY — AND THAT LAWS PROHIBITING DRUGS WERE WASTING BILLIONS OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS AND HURTING MILLIONS OF INNOCENT BYSTANDERS.

EDITOR'S NOTES



By Chuck Armsbury, Senior Editor

Nora Callahan and I participated in the mid-October 40th Reunion of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA. In the city where Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Bobby Hutton, and Big Man Howard, with a handful of armed comrades, in 1967 began monitoring the Oakland Police Department on the street; a dangerous and courageous practice aiming to halt murderous police assaults on citizens.

The Reunion featured special workshops, rousing speeches and appeals to remember Panthers still in prison after 35, 36 years in Louisiana, California and New York states. With Big Man Howard — an original 1967 Panther and its chief Party newspaper editor — I co-chaired a solidarity workshop to recount how varying ethnic groups in the Sixties (Euro-Americans, too) overcame racist thinking with class solidarity, hard work done together, and deep commitment to revolutionary change from the bottoms up.

The BPP practiced what vocal critics demanding social reforms in the late 1960s seldom did. Panthers and any group following the 10 Point Program didn't just complain about hunger in America — we started up free community breakfast programs to feed poor children of all colors. Got no doctor in the neighborhood? Open up a free medical clinic. Older people need firewood for heating? Go cut it for them. Police going nuts in your town? Call a public accountability meeting.

The 40th Reunion honored rank and file comrades who have little or no name recognition, unlike Seale and Kathleen Cleaver, and yet were the women such as Alice Spencer in Eugene, Oregon who fed, loved and instructed scores of hungry children five mornings a week in 1969-70.

The Party's Legacy is rich with struggles, full of drama and fury, once-targeted by FBI's J. Edgar Hoover for death, and still quietly honored for defending US black communities and teaching the need to save ourselves through neighborhood and community survival programs that start with and rely on the people served.

The Jericho Movement honors the political prisoners of the BPP, and information on who are these imprisoned rank and file people is available at www.thejerichomovement.com. To learn more about the Panther's and allied group's history from The Day, contact:

Billy X Jennings, It's About Time Committee, PO Box 221100, Sacramento, CA 95822, Website: www.itsabouttimebpp.com.

Speaking of remembering those unknown rank and filers, Dr. Rod Campbell died in a federal prison last summer, allegedly a victim of extreme heat and medical neglect. Dr. Rod and I corresponded frequently over the last six years. A prisoner of the drug war, Rod had been a well-regarded chemist with a major pharmaceutical corporation before falling to a drug charge offense.

Rod lived to be 60, and like many men and women in custody today, his family had withdrawn contact. For years he used his university training in science to write letters, petitions, and well-researched legal documents for fellow prisoners. And he taught me the



Black Panther Party 40th Year Reunion, October 13-15, 2006, Oakland, CA. Razor Wire Editor Chuck Armsbury stands in the upper left corner.

chemistry and the history of how methamphetamine, the once-legal "speed", became "meth" the current "monster" illuminating the drug warriors' latest public relations hysteria. I wrote a guest column for the Spokane, WA *Spokesman Review* using much of Dr. Rod's writing: www.november.org/razorwire/rzold/27/page41.html.

Belatedly, I also remember Ann-Rose Pierce of Portland, Oregon who died in 2005. Ann-Rose was passionate about justice for the imprisoned, and she often would feature Nora live on her KBOO-FM program to talk about the war on drugs.

Pause with me to remember men and women like Rod Campbell and Ann-Rose Pierce as ordinary people who cared little for fame, those among us inside or outside who make it all right and alive, day after day, over the years. You know who you are.

How to communicate with The November Coalition

- **Letters:** We receive lots of mail. Rest assured that we read every one of them, but we simply don't have the time or staff to actually respond to more than a few.
- **Legal cases:** We cannot offer you legal representation or advice. Please do not send us your legal work unless specifically requested.
- **Prisoner profiles (The WALL):** Please continue to submit your stories, but if at all possible, send pictures with them, preferably of a prison visit with your loved ones. Stories should be concise, factual, and include personal background such as age, family status etc. *Although The November Coalition staff endeavors to verify the accuracy of WALL stories, written by the prisoners themselves, we assume no responsibility for their content.* Credentialed media can be provided with documentation and family contacts if they wish to research a story. To do so, please contact media@november.org.
- **Articles for Razor Wire & Internet:** Editorials should be no more than 800 words; articles no more than 1,200 words. Submitted items should be typed & double spaced, or neatly printed by hand if you don't have access to a typewriter. Please limit the use of bold, italics, underline, or other special formatting.
- **Artwork:** We need your cartoons and sketches, please! Let your creativity and imagination run wild.
- **Donations:** We will gladly accept postage stamps from prisoners and others, as well as monetary donations.

Upcoming Events



January 7-28, 2007, Winston-Salem, NC. *January Is Drug Prohibition Month At W-S Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship.* The Social Action Committee of the Winston-Salem UU Fellowship, 4055 Robinhood Road will highlight the problems of drug prohibition. At Winston-Salem Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4055 Robinhood Road, Winston-Salem, NC, 27106-4736. For more info, see www.uufws.net.

January 10, 2007, New York City. *Drop the Rock Meeting*, 6:00 PM at the Correctional Association, 135 E. 15th Street, New York City. For more info, contact Brandie Chandler, Drop the Rock Coordinator at bchandler@correctionalassociation.org.

January 13-14, 2007, Burbank, CA. *Americans for Safe Access 2nd State Conference: Preparing for the Next Ten Years.* At the Pickwick Gardens Conference Center, 1001 Riverside Drive, Burbank, CA. For more info, contact Alex at Alex@safeaccessnow.org or (510) 251-1856 x 321, or see www.safeaccessnow.org/article.php?id=3784.

January 28, 2007, Washington, DC. *Justice Sundays: Featuring Marc Mauer of The Sentencing Project.* 2:00 to 5:00pm at The Prisons Gallery of Art, 1600 K Street NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC. Sponsored by The Prisons Foundation. For more info, see www.prisonsfoundation.org.

February 1-3, 2007, Salt Lake City, UT. *Science & Response: 2007, The Second National Conference on Methamphetamine, HIV, and Hepatitis*, sponsored by the Harm Reduction Project. At the Hilton City Center, visit www.methconference.org for info.

March 31, 2007, Colville, WA. *10th Anniversary Inside Out Benefit Auction*, hosted by The November Coalition (see page 3).

May 13-17, 2007, Warsaw, Poland. *18th International Harm Reduction Conference: Coming Of Age.* Sponsored by The International Harm Reduction Association. For more information and to register for the conference, visit www.harmreduction2007.org.

December 5-8, 2007, New Orleans, LA. *2007 International Drug Policy Reform Conference*, hosted by the Drug Policy Alliance. At Astor Crowne Plaza, New Orleans. For more info, visit www.drugpolicy.org/events/dpa2007.

Other Grassroots Groups You Should Know About

The Phantom Prisoner Newsletter — an independently produced publication intended to entertain and to inform prisoners, their families and others on a variety of criminal justice issues. Promoting the rights of all prisoners, this bi-monthly newsletter aims "to stimulate debate and to promote change by providing a voice," primarily for prisoners in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Prisoners can send \$4 in cash or stamps to subscribe:

Phantom Prisoner, Ltd., PO Box 114379, Centerdale, RI 02911

Justice Denied — the magazine for the wrongly convicted. Article submission guidelines are available and detailed. Six issues of Justice Denied magazine costs \$10 for prisoners and \$20 for all other people and organizations. "Cases of wrongful conviction submitted in accordance with guidelines will be reviewed for their suitability to be published."

By hard-copy mail, contact: Justice Denied, P.O. Box 68911, Seattle, WA 98168. Magazine may be ordered online at www.justicedenied.org.

Facts Striker — a newsletter by Families to Amend California's Three Strikes. FACTS has chapters in several California cities, a large mailing list and asks \$10/year for a subscription. Group seeks to make the case "for reform that will include as many as possible." Send money and/or contact:

FACTS, 3982 S. Figueroa St., #209, Los Angeles, CA 90037, Phone: 213-746-4844, Website: www.facts1.com

Stop Prison Rape (SPR) — seeks to end sexual violence committed against men, women, and youth in all forms of detention. Contact them at:

Stop Prisoner Rape, 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 340, Los Angeles, CA 90010, Ph: 213-384-1400, E-mail: info@spr.org, Website: www.spr.org

The Equal Justice & Reform Project — "We must push for and expect compassion and humanity in our failing judicial system, and demand an end to the disastrous War on Drugs." Contact them at: EJRP Project, 320 South Boston, Suite 1130, Tulsa, OK 74103. Website: www.equaljusticereformproject.com

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California Reconsiders Snitching

BY ALEXANDRA NATAPOFF, LAW PROFESSOR AT LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL IN LOS ANGELES)

California's criminal-justice system often convicts innocent people.

In recognition of this fact, the state Senate created the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice. That commission is now considering the government's use of criminal informants or "snitches," a public policy that has become a disturbing contributor to the wrongful conviction problem.

Snitches, of course, have powerful incentives to lie and often provide false evidence.

But their unreliability is just one facet of their challenge to the justice system.

Informants often commit new crimes with impunity, they make the criminal process more secretive and they invite official abuses.

The commission's recommendations on this subject could thus potentially strengthen the reliability and fairness of many aspects of the criminal-justice process.

The recent wave of exonerations suggests the extent of informant unreliability. A 2004 *San Francisco Magazine* study estimates that 20 percent of all California wrongful convictions, capital or otherwise, are a result of false snitch testimony.

Nationwide, according to Northwestern University Law School's Center on Wrongful Convictions, 45.9 percent of documented wrongful capital convictions flow from false informant testimony, making "snitches the leading cause of wrongful convictions in U.S. capital cases." These statistics reveal not merely that informants sometimes lie, but that juries believe them, that police and prosecutors rely on them, and that the traditional safeguards of the criminal trial process are inadequate to protect against them.

Unlike the law-abiding citizen who calls 911 to report a crime or who testifies at trial, criminal informants face prosecution for their own crimes, and thus have deep incentives to lie. If a snitch can convince the police officer or the prosecutor that his information is useful, he may avoid arrest, avoid the filing of serious charges or obtain a reduced sentence.

Snitches may also receive cash, drugs, permission to buy drugs, forgiveness for prior crimes and lenience for new crimes, even those committed in other jurisdictions. In return, law enforcement agents obtain information and convenience: They avoid having to expend time and resources prosecuting the snitch.

These secret deals between the government

and criminals can last for years, and they can be very costly to the public welfare.

In the worse cases, informants continue to commit new crimes, while government handlers may turn a blind eye as long as the informant is useful.

This makes snitching a kind of "get-out-of-jail-free" card.

Using informants also undermines governmental accountability. Police often cut deals informally with informants without creating

a written record. The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department, for example, encourages its officers not to "book" or arrest snitches at all. More generally, police and prosecutors have broad discretion to decide which informants to use and

reward, and many of these decisions will never be reviewed by a court or made public at all.

In drug investigations, in particular, officials may rely so heavily on snitches that their own integrity is compromised. Some law-enforcement officials complain that informants have become so central to the "war on drugs" that snitches drive their investigations. Others worry that traditional, more reliable investigative

methods, such as u n d e r c o v e r operations are given short shrift because informants are cheaper and more convenient.

While informants can permit the prosecution of serious criminals, sometimes more

serious criminals receive the greatest benefits from snitching. According to the Wall Street Journal, prosecutors tend to reward more serious and knowledgeable offenders.

Similarly, some California police departments maintain a "three-arrest" policy under which informants must generate three arrests or warrants before they can be rewarded.

This policy naturally favors criminals higher up on the food chain.

It also obviously encourages fabrication by informants who lack sufficient information.

Recent news stories have revealed the troubling consequences of using compensated criminals.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported earlier this year on Essam Magid, a snitch who produced numerous wrongful convictions for his handlers before one stubborn defendant finally refused to plead guilty. Recent informant scandals in Dallas and Tulsa, Texas, likewise illustrate the power of corrupt snitches to ruin the lives of dozens of innocent people.

The controversial "Stop Snitching" phenomenon has raised the profile of criminal snitching in the popular culture, and suggests that this problematic law enforcement policy is spilling over into the lives of innocent and law-abiding citizens in dangerous ways.

In recommending improvements to the informant system, the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice should consider a variety of factors.

California law already imposes some heightened requirements on "in-custody informants" or jailhouse snitches.

These should be extended to all criminal snitches, particularly in light of the policies of some police departments to release informants without arrest. Because law-enforcement officials may lack the ability and incentives to check their own informants, judges should play a greater role in ensuring the integrity of informant information by holding hearings on informant reliability.

More generally, the commission should consider requesting more information about law enforcement's use of informants. The California

Legislature and the public need to know more about this secretive practice: How law enforcement uses informants, the costs and benefits of doing so, and whether using criminal snitches makes our communities safer or more dangerous.

When used properly, informants can be a powerful and appropriate investigative tool. But they can also be destructive, crime-producing and corrupting. The widespread use of informants means that much of the real adjudicative process takes place underground, without rules, records or lawyers, and without public or judicial scrutiny of the fairness and accuracy of the process.

The commission has thus already made its first contribution by initiating public scrutiny of this netherworld of criminal deal-making.

The Report and Recommendations from the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice were released on October 10, 2006 and are available at: www.ccfaj.org/r-r-use-expert.html

NATIONWIDE, ACCORDING TO NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL'S CENTER ON WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS, 45.9 PERCENT OF DOCUMENTED WRONGFUL CAPITAL CONVICTIONS FLOW FROM FALSE INFORMANT TESTIMONY, MAKING "SNITCHES THE LEADING CAUSE OF WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS IN U.S. CAPITAL CASES."

IN DRUG INVESTIGATIONS, IN PARTICULAR, OFFICIALS MAY RELY SO HEAVILY ON SNITCHES THAT THEIR OWN INTEGRITY IS COMPROMISED. SOME LAW-ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS COMPLAIN THAT INFORMANTS HAVE BECOME SO CENTRAL TO THE "WAR ON DRUGS" THAT SNITCHES DRIVE THEIR INVESTIGATIONS.

U.S. Correctional Population At New Record: 7 Million People

A record 7 million people — or one in every 32 American adults — were behind bars, on probation or on parole by the end of last year, according to the Justice Department.

Of those, 2.2 million were in prison or jail, an increase of 2.7 percent over the previous year. More than 4.1 million people were on probation and 784,208 were on parole at the end of 2005.

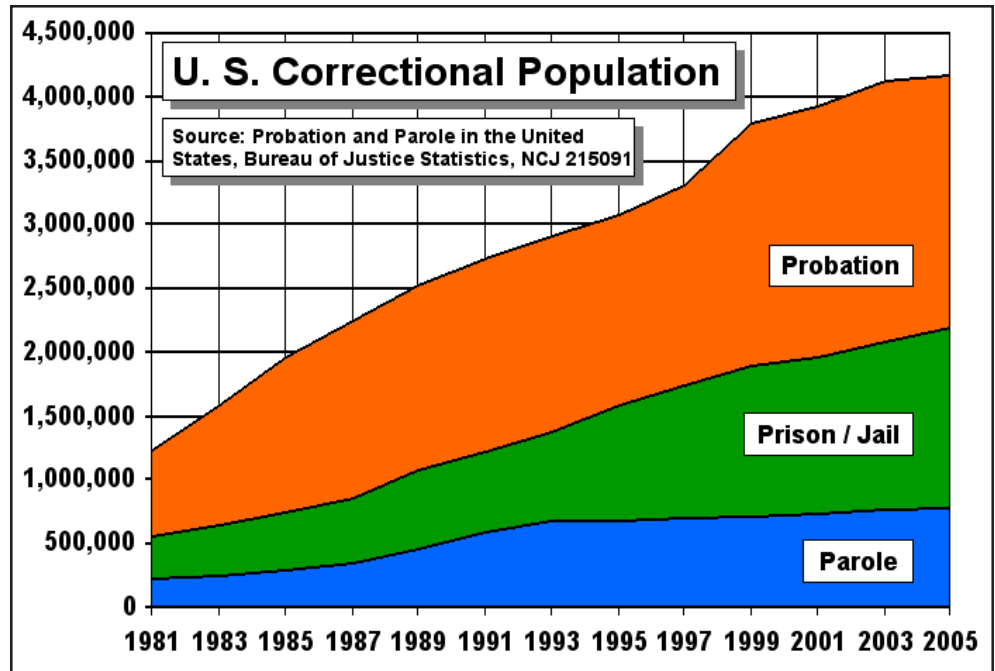
Men still far outnumber women in prisons and jails, but the female population is growing faster.

From 1995 to 2003, inmates in federal prison for drug offenses have accounted for 49 percent of total prison population growth.

In the 25-29 age group, 8.1 percent of black men — about one in 13 — are incarcerated, compared with 2.6 percent of Hispanic men and 1.1 percent of white men.

Source Reports from US Bureau of Justice Statistics (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs) — *Prisoners in 2005*, NCJ 215092, and *Probation and Parole in the United States: 2005*, NCJ 215091

Stop The Drug War!



What is The November Coalition?

The November Coalition was founded in 1997 as a non-profit, grassroots organization with a mission to raise awareness in individuals and communities about the spiraling increase in numbers of imprisoned in the United States due to drug-law enforcement.

We arouse and activate fellow taxpayers about existing and impending dangers of an overly powerful federal government acting beyond constitutional constraints. We counsel victims of this peculiar 'war,' most of whom were minor participants, and warn our fellow citizens of the steady erosion of civil liberties, human rights and personal freedoms allowed by federal and state authorities.

Coalition members and supporters are convinced that the War on Drugs does nothing but stimulate an ever more profitable and violent underground economy. The intent of any law should create a safer country and safer world, not one more costly and less free.

Visit us on the web at www.november.org.

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